SIMPLICITY AND FASCINATION

By ANNE BEALE

MATTHEWS &
BROOKE,
BOOKSELLERS

M. Smith.

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'WILL YOU ALLOW ME TO OFFER YOU A VERY ROUGH SHAWL?'—PAGE 77.

SIMPLICITY

AND

FASCINATION.

By ANNE BEALE,

AUTHOR OF

'GLADYS, THE REAPER,' 'IDONEA,' 'THE QUEEN O' THE MAY,'
'FAY ARLINGTON,' ETC.

'This small inheritance my father left me
Contenteth me, and is worth a monarchy.
I seek not to wax great by others' waning,
Or gather wealth, I care not with what envy;
Sufficeth that I have maintains my state,
And sends the poor well pleasèd from my gate.'
Henry VI. Part II.

GRIFFITH AND FARRAN,

SUCCESSORS TO NEWBERY AND HARRIS,

WEST CORNER OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD, LONDON.

E. P. DUTTON & CO., NEW YORK.

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To My Mother,

WHO WILL READ WITH INDULGENCE,

AND RECOGNISE, AS SHE READS, MANY FAMILIAR SCENES,

THIS STORY IS INSCRIBED,

IN TOKEN OF THE LOVE AND GRATITUDE

OF

HER AFFECTIONATE DAUGHTER,

THE AUTHOR.

SIMPLICITY AND FASCINATION.

CHAPTER I.

'Born in one week, and in one font baptized
On the same festal day, they grew together,
And their first tottering steps were hand in hand,
While the two fathers, in half-earnest sport,
Betrothed them to each other.'

HARTLEY COLERIDGE.

I MUST begin my story by requesting the reader to go back with me over many years already trodden by the foot of time, and to walk with me to the door of a snug and pretty house, situated about a mile from a small market town in the county of Somerset. The evening is just beginning to close in, as we move off from the turnpike road, cross a stile, and pass through a fine field of corn, ready for the sickle. Brightly shine the blue corn-flowers and ruddy poppies amongst the golden ears, and thickly twines the wild clematis in the green hedgerow. This neat gate at the bottom of the field leads us into a large orchard, full of ripe apples, waiting for the hungry jaws of the cider-mill; in the midst of which is a huge round pigeon-house, towards which pigeons are flocking, as to their dormitory. We pass the well-perforated pigeon-house, and, emerging from the orchard through another neat gate, circumnavigate a pond full of sleepy ducks and geese, cross the road and reach an ornamental wicket, flanked by a trim hedge of laurel and privet. We venture through this inviting entrance, and find ourselves in a small court, in front of a low-roofed thatched house, covered with roses and Virginian creeper, into whose latticed windows we long to peep, sure of finding peace and plenty within. Before knocking at the door, we glance round us, and see another ornamental wicket-gate opposite us, dividing more trim hedges of laurel and privet, through which we spy a straight gravel walk, and the heads of

sunflowers, hollyhocks, and dahlias, that stand up proudly to look at the setting sun through some dark yew trees at the bottom of the path.

From certain rural sounds, of men whistling, cattle lowing, horses tramping, poultry cackling, and human voices answering human voices, we feel convinced that there must be a large farmyard somewhere at the back, but we are not permitted to see any of the detail here in the front.

We knock at the door, and are admitted by a rosy country girl into a passage, where is a stand of geraniums, and thence conducted into a large hall, where we will sit down in a corner, invisible as ghosts by daylight, and look about us.

This hall is a substantial apartment, panelled with black oak. Heavy oaken rafters form the ceiling, and polished oaken planks the floor; while an oaken chimney-corner usurps a third of one side of the room, on the hearth of which are placed two bright steel dogs, or andirons. Across these dogs lie big logs of wood, that burn as if they took a pleasure in enlivening by their cheerful flames the party assembled near them.

Seated at a table, with a large work-box open before her, and a basket containing all kinds of stockings at her elbow, sits a young girl, engaged in sewing a button on a boy's waistcoat. She may be about sixteen or seventeen years old, and looks very smiling and good-tempered. By her side, minutely examining the contents of her work-box, sits a youth about her own age, of a grave and sedate countenance; and opposite the pair, a curly-headed, pale little boy, busily occupied in covering a piece of paper with hieroglyphical pencil-marks. In a large green chair is a jolly, sunburnt, elderly man, smoking a pipe. He has settled himself in one chimney-corner, from whence he looks complacently about him; whilst in the opposite chimney-corner sits a tall, middle-aged woman, erect and stately, knitting or knotting, or doing some curious ornamental work. On a huge oak settle, that stretches from one side of the chimney half down the room, and partly encircles the whole party with a projecting arm, are three children of various ages. The eldest, a boy of about fifteen, is reading, or seeming to read, but still occasionally joining in the conversation of the rest. As he leans carelessly over the arm of the settle, to let the blaze from the fire fall upon his book, an anxious, thoughtful expression steals over his face, and makes him look too careworn for his years.

The other two children, a boy and girl, are twins, and as much alike as twins are usually supposed to be. They are remarkably handsome, and apparently as remarkably idle, for a pile of lesson-books lies unopened by the side of the boy, together

with a small unfinished boat; and near the girl is a piece of needlework, with the needle and thread hanging loosely upon it; whilst the pair are occupied in tying together a bunch of ripe corn-ears of unusually large growth, and occasionally picking out a grain and eating it. When they have finished this business, the boy rises, and, having called the attention of the party to the size and splendour of his autumn bouquet, stands upon a chair and fastens it by a string to the mantelpiece, which, unlike our modern ones, is nearer the ceiling by a yard than the floor. This being achieved, he jumps down rather noisily, and stumbles against the quiet possessor of the pipe, who utters a growl; then peeps over the shoulder of the younger child at the table, and, giving him a hearty knock on the crown of his head, exclaims, 'Well done, Charley! I declare if it isn't as like as it can stare. Look, Captain Burford! Aunty, look! If he hasn't made a capital likeness of Jessie and Nelson!'

'Oh, Peter, how rough you are!' said Charley, yielding up the paper, and rubbing dolorously the crown of his head.

'By Neptune, that's not so bad!' said Captain Burford, handing the paper over to his opposite neighbour. 'We must make an artist of him, after all. What do you say, Miss Burton? Shall we apprentice him to the arts?'

'I do not think my poor brother would have thought of *apprenticing* him to anything,' replied Miss Burton, looking at the paper through an eyeglass. 'And as to an artist, he would as soon have thought of making him a shoemaker.'

Charley hung down his head, and Captain Burford laughed.

'And why not a shoemaker?' he asked; 'it will be "all the same a hundred years hence."'

'You always put one down with that very uncomfortable sentence,' said Miss Burton, with an irritated voice.

'Let me see the likeness,' said Jessie, laying aside the waistcoat. 'Well, I declare, it is like you, Nelson; but if this is like me, I am certainly no beauty.'

'Oh, but you are a beauty, Jessie!' exclaimed Charley; 'you have such a nice smile.'

'Oh, my dear,' said Miss Burton, 'it requires something more than a smile to make a beauty;' and she drew herself up with a proud consciousness of good looks.

'This really would be like you, Jessie,' said Nelson, 'if it *had* the smile.'

'Just give it to me,' said Charley. 'Now, Jessie dear, laugh. Look again now, Nelson.'

'That is capital!' said Nelson. 'Why, you are a great genius, Charley, and no mistake.'

The little boy smiled and blushed. The picture was again handed round, and finally secured by Nelson, who put it in his pocket-book.

'Why don't you sketch me?' asked the young lady on the settle, putting herself in an attitude.

'You're not good-looking enough, Miss Anna,' broke in the bookworm; 'is she, Aunt Betsey?'

'Pynsent, you always discourage that dear child!' whispered Aunt Betsey. 'You know she and Peter are the only ones who inherit the family beauty.'

'Very complimentary!' said Pynsent, resuming his book.

At this crisis the red-cheeked servant-maid came in with a letter, which she presented to Aunt Betsey.

'Why do you not bring the letters on a waiter, Dinah?' asked Aunt Betsey.

'Iz, zure, ma'am,' said Dinah, making a hasty exit.

'Excuse me,' said Aunt Betsey, glancing round apologetically.

'To be sure!' said the Captain impatiently; adding to himself in an undertone, 'Why don't she make haste?'

All eyes were fixed on the letter, which took a long time to read.

'So, ma'am?' at last suggested the Captain interrogatively.

'I thought so,' said Aunt Betsey majestically; 'but you would insist on my writing. Nothing satisfactory to be obtained from those sort of people.'

'I suppose I may see it, as your co-guardian?' said the Captain.

Aunt Betsey passed over the letter, and he read it attentively.

'Odds bobs, madam!' he said, when he had finished, 'what would you have? Why, the good gentleman offers to educate one of the girls!'

'Educate, indeed! and for a governess! What would my dear brother'—

'Your dear brother, ma'am, and my good friend, is, I am sorry to say, no more; and we must look at things as they are. Co-trustee number three,—I'm poetical, you see,—what do you think of the matter?'

Here the Captain handed the letter to Jessie. She looked perplexed at the disputants, but said, 'Why, aunty, it really is very kind. He says not only that he will educate one of the girls, but that if the boys are steady and turn out well, he may lend them a helping hand. I think we should be thankful.'

'Very fine for you, my dear,' said Aunt Betsey; 'you are too old to be sent to school, and then made a governess of.'

'I only wish I were not,' said Jessie.

Here a long discussion ensued between the Captain and Miss Burton, in which Jessie was occasionally called upon to take a part, concerning the propriety of submitting Miss Annabella Burton—the little girl now pouting on the settle—to the horrors of a first-rate education, with a view to her becoming a governess. An elderly bachelor uncle in London, whom none of the present party had ever seen, proposed putting her to a good school for some years as a pupil, then making a teacher and learner of her in the same school, and finally launching her on life as a governess. The discussion was gradually warming into a quarrel, in spite of Jessie's quiet interference, when it was put a stop to by Miss Anna herself, who said suddenly,—

'But, Captain Burford, I don't want to be a governess.'

'The devil you don't!' said the Captain in an angry tone; 'pray then, little miss, what may you want to be?'

'I want to be a lady, and marry an officer,' was the reply, with a naughty toss of the head.

A general laugh put the disputants in good humour.

'But, you proud little minx,' said the Captain, 'you know Nelson is going to marry Jessie. They have been engaged ever since they were born.'

'Oh, I know that!' said Anna; 'but I don't mean to marry Nelson.'

'And pray on what officer may you have fixed your affections?' asked the Captain.

Again Anna tossed her head.

'But, my dear Anna,' here interrupted Jessie, 'if you mean to marry an officer, you must learn to play, and sing, and dance, and draw, and I know not what besides.'

'Must I?' said the little girl, running towards her sister; 'then perhaps I will go to school, and then I can marry when I leave school, and shouldn't need to be a governess. I should like to go to a grand school, Aunt Betsey, very much. Will you write and tell Uncle Timothy that I am very much obliged to him?'

Aunt Betsey was softened at once. She had no doubt that any girl possessing, as Anna did, the Burton beauty, *would* be sure to marry as soon as she left school; so she yielded, for once, to her co-trustees.

'I declare we are nearly all settled now,' remarked the Captain, taking a long pull at his pipe. 'There's Jessie, the farmer; Pynsent, the doctor; Peter, the sailor; Anna, the — gov — wife of the officer; and Charley—well, you must have some more schooling, my boy, and then we will see about you.'

'I will help Jessie to manage the farm,' said Charley, putting

a finishing touch into the eye of the Captain, whose picture he had been trying to take for the hundredth time.

'Very good! very good! So now let us have our rubber,' exclaimed the Captain.

Charley opened a small box that he took down from a book-shelf, and produced two packs of cards, which he placed opposite each other on the round table, and beside each pack four ivory markers. Aunt Betsey laid aside her knotting, and seated herself opposite Nelson, whilst the Captain had Jessie for a *vis-à-vis* and partner.

'Mind, Jessie,' said the Captain, 'that you return my lead, and remember how many trumps are out.'

'May I put up your tricks, Captain Burford?' asked Anna, seating herself by his side.

'To be sure, Mrs. Colonel Somebody. Only remember to shove them together when they are six.'

The game went on.

'Three by cards and two by honours,' said the Captain. 'I must take a pinch of snuff upon the strength of it,' and he pulled out a large round box.

'Why did you trump my best diamond, Nelson?' asked Miss Burton; 'we lost a trick by it.'

'I thought all the others were out,' replied Nelson, 'and that my father would overtrump me.'

'Six tricks again, Captain Burford,' said Anna, pushing the graduated cards up together.

'Oh, I beg your pardon!' exclaimed Jessie; 'I quite thought that the ace was out.'

'There, my dear!' cried the Captain impatiently, 'we shall lose the game by that oversight. How many, Anna? Two by honours and two by cards? Five and four are nine. In nine holes, by Jove! If you hadn't led your king, we should have been game, and now I daresay we shall lose it. Nine never won a game.'

'I am very sorry; I really will try to play better,' said Jessie, dealing and turning up a deuce of clubs.

'Good luck under a black deuce,' said the Captain. 'Confound the cards! they come from Beggars' Row, sure enough. Two to one we shall lose the game; not a trump in my hand! I give it up.'

'I thought, Captain Burford, that whist meant silence,' said Miss Burton, leading the ace of trumps, and continuing to play all the honours.

'I told you so, Jessie; nine never won a game. Go on, Nelson, now it's your turn; pick 'em up. Nine—ten—eleven—twelve, by Jove! Six by cards and four by honours. A

slam. There, Jessie! you lost that game; I vow I will never play with you again.' And here Captain Burford got up, fumed about the room, and sat down again.

'You're wanted, please, miss,' said the red-faced servant, coming in and addressing Jessie.

'Pynsent, will you take my hand for a few minutes?' said Jessie.

Pynsent took the cards, and Jessie went into the kitchen.

And such a kitchen! A huge dresser, with three shelves covered with pewter plates, and the rest with white ware, all shining and clean; the tall chimney-piece, adorned with brass and tin candlesticks, also shining; the prickly dry furze and crisp sticks crackling on the hearth, and the tea-kettle singing lustily above them, proclaiming itself ready for Captain Burford's 'toddy;' gammons of bacon, hams, and tongues hanging from the wooden raft on the ceiling, and bread and cheese spread upon the white deal table.

Jessie found a labourer's wife awaiting her, who wanted her husband's wages in advance, and medicine for children ill of the measles. She went up-stairs to her large storeroom, and procured the necessary articles. She returned and satisfied the poor woman, and promised to visit the children; then she went about some household matters with Dinah, and finally ordered in supper. When she returned to the hall, she was greeted by the Captain with,—

'We've beaten them, Jessie; double, single, and the rub—four points. We must tell Uncle James that we beat Aunt Betsey to shivers. I wonder he isn't here; he is afraid of you, ma'am; he seldom comes here of an evening now.'

Aunt Betsey blushed and frowned.

Here Charley put away the cards, and Miss Annabella condescended to help Dinah to lay the cloth. A plain, substantial supper was spread, and a jug of Somersetshire cider, together with a steaming tea-kettle, appeared.

'Let me make the toddy,' said Pynsent. 'Give me the keys to get the rum, Jessie;' and Pynsent, unlocking a cupboard, produced a right jolly-looking bottle.

'One slice of lemon, two lumps of sugar, a wine-glass full of rum, and the rest water,' said the Captain.

'I know,' replied Pynsent.

'Well, Miss Betsey,' said Captain Burford, 'I hope you will all come to my ball to-morrow. It will be our last kick-up before Nelson leaves, and one don't know when he may sail. Heigh-ho! Why wouldn't you be a sailor, Nelson, if you must go away? And I named you after the great commander, too. I hate sojering.

'I do not much enjoy children's dances,' said Aunt Betsey, 'but I shall be happy to avail myself of your kind invitation on this occasion.'

'And you, Jessie, and the rest?' asked Captain Burford.

'Oh, I think you must excuse me!' replied Jessie; 'I must look after the harvest.'

'Hang the harvest! you must come to my ball.'

'I cannot dance well enough, and should not like to disgrace your guardianship,' said Jessie, smiling.

'Oh, Jessie, how unkind!' said Nelson.

Jessie glanced reproachfully at Nelson, and then at her half-mourning dress. The youth understood her, and was silent.

'Aunty will take Anna, and the three boys can do without me,' said Jessie.

'Indeed we can't,' cried the two younger ones; 'nobody is so good at games as you. It is worth a pound to play at blind-man's-buff with you.'

'But you will not have blindman's-buff to-morrow,' said Jessie, 'because all the grand people will be there.'

'Then I shan't go,' said Pynsent; 'I hate grand people.'

'That's more sincere than polite,' said the Captain, 'seeing that I consider myself a grand person, and Aunt Betsey has no mean notion of her family; but least said, soonest mended. I shall expect you all. Mind, Jessie, no excuses! I should be miserable without your good-natured face; and as to Nelson, fie! for shame! and you engaged to him ever since you were born! I remember it as if it was to-day. Nelson came into the world the 20th of June 1815,—year memorable for the battle of Waterloo,—and in the evening of that day I walked down here to ask why your father hadn't been to congratulate me, and drink his health. To my astonishment, I found that you were born the same day. Old schoolfellows, old friends, son and daughter. We sat down at that identical round table, and called for the toddy. We drank one glass to Nelson's health, one glass to your health, and one to your marriage at some future day. First time I ever saw your father more than a little merry, though those were days of hard drinking. It was then I vowed I would call my boy Nelson, after the great commander, and destined him for the navy. Your father looked through the old pedigree to find a grand family name for you. He was divided between Jessica and Annabella, but I inclined to the former, because I like the song of "Jessie of Dunblane," and so it was settled. He wanted to add "Pynsent," on account of that confounded family of Burton Pynsent, that he said you belonged to; but I suggested that it was a boy's name, so it was reserved for this younker here.

Ah! those were happy days, weren't they, Miss Burton? Well, and so are these: we have no reason to complain. Now, Nel, past half after nine. "Early to bed"—you know the rest.'

There was a great shaking of hands, and a general rush to open the door, where the full-faced harvest-moon looked so magnificent overhead, that all went out to greet her, and to congratulate one another on the prospect of a continuance of fine weather and a good harvest.

And now, patient reader, you and I will also emerge from our corner, and, wishing our new friends good-night, proceed to make some fresh acquaintances.

CHAPTER II.

'A doctor for near half a century,
He lived and laboured for the good of men:
Though called to watch the sick-bed of the rich,
And earn the fee for care and 'tendance due,
He never shrank, at all unseemly hours,
From waiting on the poor man's couch of pain,
And living to alleviate the ills
That human nature is foredoom'd to bear.'

WHILST you and I, gentle reader, have been employed in the hall at Fairfield, making acquaintance with the family of orphan children and their guardians, there has been much anxiety and some bustle within a few miles of us. Just when our little party were about to sit down to their rubber, Mr. Michelson was pacing impatiently the dining-room of Michelson Hall. He had just risen from his solitary dessert, and had left his wine-glass dry and his plate unsoiled. He was a tall, handsome man of middle age, dressed in black, and, as the French would say, *tiré à quatre épingles*. His head was just beginning to be bald a little above the forehead, and his hair, naturally wavy and of a dark brown, was carefully brushed over the invidious space of white. His eyes were fine,—too fine, perhaps, too large, too searching, too bright, almost too bold; your glance fell beneath them, you scarcely knew why, not exactly from personal shame, but from a kind of intuitive shame for him: they professed to be blue, but verged upon green; and if, to borrow again from the French tongue, so rich in figures, *le bleu et le vert se jurent*, it is not to be wondered at that they were so restless and yet so impudent. The nose was *un peu retroussé*. (French again! but what polite writer of the present refined age could say 'turned up,' when speaking of the nose of a gentleman

of ten thousand a year?) The lips were red and full, and concealed, or, more properly, were frequently parted to reveal, a magnificent set of teeth. Diamond studs adorned his shirt, and his shirt-collar was as stiff as starch could make it. He was altogether an uncomfortably good-looking man.

At last the door opened.

'Well, Stephens, what news?' he said, as a tall, wary-looking butler entered.

'Miss Rutherford started by the mail for London this morning at seven, sir. She had no luggage whatever, sir. The boots particularly remarked that she had no luggage.'

'What had the boots to do with her or her luggage?—the impudent rascal!'

'Nothing whatever, sir; only you told me to ask.'

'Hold your tongue, and answer my questions! Did Miss Rutherford make known her intention of leaving to any one?'

'No, sir. The housemaid said that she heard her in her room moving about at between five and six; but, as she was always an early riser, and frequently walked before breakfast, she thought nothing of it.'

'Did she know whether she was in bed at all last night?'

'She thought not, sir; it was near two o'clock before she went up-stairs.'

'I suppose I know that, since I was with her up to that hour in the drawing-room. Were the servants gone to bed when I went to my room?'

'All but me and Vigars, sir.'

'Ah! Vigars! He came in with tea,—then with candles,—then, as usual, with the keys. Tell me exactly what he said about Miss Rutherford. Come, sir, no evasions!'

'Why, sir, he said nothing particular.'

'What did he say that was not particular? Speak at once, or I will dismiss you.'

'He only said, sir, that you and Miss Rutherford seemed to be having a quarrel, and that he heard high words as he came through the hall.'

'Go on; what more?'

'Nothing particular, sir, that I can remember, except that Miss Rutherford was too high and mighty for her situation.'

'The impudent scoundrel! What was Miss Rutherford's situation to him? And that was all?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Well, Stephens, I think you are a faithful servant enough, as times go, and I will trust to your discretion to try and find out where Miss Rutherford is. As companion to my late dear wife,

—here Mr. Michelson heaved a sigh, and glanced at a mourning ring,—'I always thought it my duty to treat her with consideration. When Lady Charlotte died,—how long ago is it now, Stephens?'

'More than a year, sir.'

'When my wife died I felt that Miss Rutherford had still a claim upon me. Besides, Chatham was so fond of her that I knew he would be miserable if she left us; so, as you know, I offered her the situation of superintendent of my household, which she accepted. She was young and inexperienced; still I believe she did her duty. What do you think, Stephens?'

'Yes, sir; your own daughter could never have been more careful and particular.'

'Tush! Well, of course I am anxious to do what is right by her. In the first place, to find out where she is gone; in the second, to let it be understood that she took offence at something I said to her concerning the management of the house. You understand?'

'Yes, sir.'

'I believe it is well known that I always treated her as an equal; and no one can suppose that she left on account of any unkindness on my part.'

'I should think not, sir.'

'Why do you speak with that tone?'

'I didn't mean any tone, sir.'

'Then don't assume a tone. If Miss Rutherford does not return to-morrow, you must see the guard of the mail; find out whether she went to London; follow her; make inquiries at the Sun, where the coach stops, and where she probably will be; see her, and give her a letter that I will write.'

'Very well, sir.'

'Let it be understood that I am particularly anxious to serve her, because my dear wife'—another glance at the mourning ring, and a pressure of the eyes with the hand it ornamented—'recommended her to my care on her deathbed. Don't look so surprised.'

'I didn't mean to look surprised, sir. Your orders shall be faithfully attended to, sir.'

'And now you may go. See that the servants do not make Miss Rutherford's sudden departure an excuse for aspersing her character. I believe they did not like her.'

'Very well, sir. Most of us liked her, sir.'

Here the butler left the dining-room, and found his fellow-servant Vigars in the hall very near the door. The pair went quietly together into the butler's pantry.

'I never!' said Vigars. 'Poor crittur! I don't think she'll ever come back. I never see such a way as she was in,—trembling with passion, and her eyes streaming with tears, that she tried to hide when I came in; and master in a towering rage; he was standing close up to where she sat, and I believe he'd 'a' struck her, if I hadn't come in. I heard her say, "I will leave you—I will never bear this—I would starve, die, rather!" And when I went in again they were at it still, only calmer; and so they went on from nine o'clock till near two in the morning.'

''Tis very odd,' said Stephens, 'but I don't think my poor mistress ever really liked her, especially along at the last, though she was as submissive and attentive as any one could be, and nearly cried her heart out when she died. There was a un'appy 'ooman, Vigars, as Lady Charlotte wus! You never see any one die of a broken heart, if she didn't. She couldn't bear to be stinted at home, whilst she knew that thousands and thousands were spent in pictures and operas and all kinds of show. I shouldn't wonder if that wasn't why Miss Rutherford went away. I know I won't bear it long longer; and if it wasn't for Master Chatham's sake, I should have left long ago.'

'We must have a proper housekeeper now,' said Vigars, 'and our table will be better served.'

We will now leave Mr. Michelson and his household to their various meditations upon the sudden flight of Miss Rutherford, and, allowing a few days to pass, travel to London. Arrived there, we find ourselves compelled to traverse several intricate streets, until we reach a second-rate hotel, situated in one of the many minor streets leading out of Piccadilly. We enter, and, ascending the stairs, attain a bedroom, in which several persons are assembled.

The object of attention to all seems to be a tiny baby, happily sleeping. A gentleman of kindly aspect and middle age, wearing a brown suit of clothes and a wig, is seated on a low chair, gazing on the infant, whilst a portly woman, the landlady of the hotel, stands by his side wiping her eyes.

'I do not know what is to become of the poor infant, sir,' said the landlady to the gentleman in brown; 'it does seem such a pity to send it to the workhouse.'

'Will you kindly tell me all you know of the unfortunate mother, ma'am?' he said.

'Well, sir, she came here two days ago. She was very handsome and well dressed, and I let her have everything she wanted. She looked very unhappy and ill. She slept here; and the next morning early, she told me to send for a surgeon of the name of Barnard, as she did not feel quite well. I asked where you

lived, sir; but she did not know, so we looked in the Directory, and found your address. You know the rest, sir.'

'Ah, yes! poor creature! So young! and to have left this unfortunate infant as a living legacy to the benevolent!'

'Poor innocent!' said the landlady, 'I would take it, and proud to do it, if I was richer.'

'The good-will does you honour, ma'am,' said Mr. Barnard, 'and I only wish such a kind heart could be found to shelter this poor child. But did the poor thing leave any money?'

'She gave this purse into my hand, sir, just before you came, and told me to pay you and myself what was right; I have not opened it yet.'

The purse was found to contain between thirty and forty pounds, in bank-notes, sovereigns, and silver. The sovereigns were wrapped together in a piece of torn writing-paper, on which was writing in a female hand. The sheet had been torn crossways, so that only broken lines were legible. There was no single complete sentence. The words 'for ever . . . acknowledge me as . . . heart-broken vic . . . make your cruel treatment known, . . . was all that was written, together with the signature, 'Sophia.'

'There is not much to be made out of that,' said Mr. Barnard, bending over the child; 'but we must do our best to find the poor lady's friends, for the sake of this innocent. We will not send it to the workhouse yet, ma'am. We will inqu're; and then —and then'—

'I will keep it for a week or so, sir,' said the landlady.

'And I will defray any expenses you may incur till the unfortunate mystery is cleared up. Poor dead lady! poor motherless babe!' returned the doctor.

All proper measures were at once resorted to, but no intelligence was obtained of the unfortunate lady. Suspended by a small hair chain from her neck was a wedding ring, which was found to be of the same size as a very curious antique cameo that was taken from the third finger of her left hand. These, together with her wearing apparel, were carefully put aside. It was noted down that she had large dark violet eyes, an aquiline nose, a well shaped but rather broad mouth, dark hair braided across a high forehead, and a dark, pale complexion; that she was tall, and dressed in a straw bonnet lined and trimmed with pink, a brown silk dress, and a large black shawl with a broad Indian border.

She was buried in the churchyard of St. James's, at Mr. Timothy Barnard's request, who, together with the landlady, attended the funeral. It cannot be said, as of some, that she

was 'unwept,' for this worthy pair shed tears of pity over her grave.

When all the expenses of her funeral, and those incurred at the inn, were paid, her purse, as may be supposed, was empty; and there was the baby—a small, weak, puling, tender-limbed infant—to be taken to the workhouse.

Mr. Timothy Barnard went home to his house in Duke Street. He entered the little back room on the ground-floor which was his study, and sat down in his arm-chair.

'What am I to do?' he said, muttering aloud to a large bookcase. 'Old bachelor, quite unused to children. But the workhouse! Poor thing! poor thing! And the mother's look at me, and then at the child! Why did she send for me? Did she know me? They asked that at the inquest, and no wonder. And I promised to educate one of my nieces too. At my age to have to deal with two female children! Old fool! I'm always putting my foot in it. And why not the workhouse? She would never be the wiser, and just as happy, I daresay. But what have I to do with my money better than to help the orphan? Hasn't the great Father of the fatherless put her in my way? Doesn't He say to me, 'You have no children, adopt one of mine'? Did the Saviour send them to the workhouse when they came to Him? Oh, Timothy, Timothy! what did the Apostle Paul say to thy namesake long ago? "Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart and of a good conscience."'

Here Mr. Timothy Barnard paused in his conversation with the bookshelf; rose from his chair, opened one of its glass doors, and took down a large Bible; re-seated himself, and turned to the Epistles to Timothy—in the first chapter of the first Epistle he found the words he had quoted. He read it through, still aloud, as if to the furniture; then closing the sacred volume, covered his face with his hands, and was silent awhile.

'Very well, I will do it, please God,' he said, rising again from his chair, rubbing his hands, and finally depositing them in the tails of his coat. He walked about the room with a pleased smile on his countenance, and whistled a tune of long ago, that he must have learned in a Somersetshire hayfield. He suddenly caught sight of some letters that lay unopened upon the table, and came to an anchor before them. He opened one; the word 'Appeal' was printed at the top. 'Not now,' he murmured, 'female orphan first.' He broke the seal of another: 'Dear me! there's Widow Eveleigh thanking me again, as if half-an-hour's advice and five pen'orth of drugs were worth so much gratitude. A third: 'With Lady Singleton's compliments

and best thanks,' accompanied by a cheque for fifty pounds. 'That will just do for her first year of babyhood,' said he, putting the cheque and note into his desk. A fourth—this was rather a long letter, neatly written. He hemmed, as if to clear his voice for the benefit of the bookshelf, and read as follows :—

'FAIRFIELD, *August* 23.

'MY DEAR UNCLE TIMOTHY,

'As my aunt is not very well, she has requested me to answer your kind letter. We are all very much obliged to you for your generous offer of providing for one of us two girls. As I am now seventeen, and greatly wanted at home, to see to the farm and the younger children, I cannot avail myself of it; but my sister Annabella, who is only ten, will be very glad to do so. She will be ready by Christmas, or any time you may think proper. Indeed, my dear uncle, we are very grateful to you; and Captain Burford, who met you at Fairfield when you came there to pay the wedding visit, desires me to say, with his best respects, that it is just what he expected from you. I wish you would come to Fairfield again. Although we have never seen you, I assure you we should give you a hearty welcome. As I am the eldest, my dear mother used to talk to me a great deal about you, and taught me to love you very much. I hope, please God, we shall get on very well. Everybody is very kind to us. Our good doctor has offered to take Pynsent as his apprentice for nothing; so he is, so far, provided for. Captain Burford thinks he can get Peter into the navy soon; and Charles says he will stay at home and be a farmer; he is very clever, indeed, at almost everything. You see how God keeps His promise to the "fatherless." The crops are very good this year, and we are all strong and healthy, except perhaps Charley, —he is not so strong as the rest of us. I hope you will excuse this long letter, and that you will write to us sometimes. Aunt Betsey desires her best compliments, and my brothers and sister unite with me in love and gratitude.

'I remain, my dear uncle,

'Your affectionate and dutiful niece,

'JESSIE BURTON.'

The good doctor wiped his eyes; then he looked over the letter again, and commented upon it.

'Very pretty letter! Nice, natural little girl, I am sure. Good sort of fellow, that Captain Burford. "My dear mother"—blessed angel! If she hadn't married that proud, weak man, she would have been happier: she was too plain and humble-

minded for him. Dear sister! I wish I had seen her once more. No use repining. Poor children! all in a fair way of getting on in the world. Aunt Betsey, indeed!—prouder than her brother, and weaker—thinking of nothing but her beauty! That won't carry her to heaven, or go with her to the grave.'

Mr. Timothy Barnard rang the bell. An elderly woman appeared.

'Tell John to bring the carriage,' he said.

'The carriage has been at the door more than an hour, sir. We was beginning to be afraid something was the matter,' replied the housekeeper.

'Bless me! I quite forgot myself. All my patients waiting! Give me my hat, Mrs. Hicks, and cane, and gloves. Dinner at seven. Good morning.'

Mr. Barnard drove to see a great many patients, in a comfortable carriage and pair. During his drive his thoughts were occupied by his orphans, and he occasionally communicated them to the carriage or the coachman's back, to which both were well accustomed, and of which they took about equal notice. After having passed through most of the fashionable streets of St. James's, and stopped every five or ten minutes at different doors in that locality, to feel pulses, examine tongues, hear complaints, and write prescriptions, he called out to the coachman,—

'Peckham, John.'

'Very good, sir,' was the reply; and to Peckham they drove.

The carriage drew up before a small, neat house, with a twelve-foot-square flower-garden in front, situated at the end of a small row of buildings, in a broad, airy road. After London, it looked quite a country scene. There was actually a cock crowing somewhere behind the houses, and two or three dusty birds were chirping on the railings that surrounded them. A mistaken butterfly was disputing the possession of a brown plant of mignonette with a deluded bee, and something very like trees was visible in the distance.

The doctor walked up the little garden, and was met at the door by a neat, almost ladylike-looking woman, in widow's weeds.

'How do you do, Mrs. Eveleigh?' he said, holding out his hand kindly.

'I am so glad to see you, sir! how good of you to come!' said Mrs. Eveleigh, leading the way into a neat room, the walls of which were covered with portraits of every size and sort.

'Not so, my dear madam,' replied Mr. Barnard; 'my visit is selfish. You have not yet begun the little school we talked

of, and I wished to ask you whether you would like to take charge of a motherless infant instead.'

'O yes, sir! Ever since I lost my own baby, I have wished to have one to nurse. Besides, it would be an object, sir, and help to fill up the great void which *his* death has left in my heart.'

'Just so! just so! It is right that you should know the child's history, though we will keep it secret from the world. I feel that I can trust you, because you have a kind heart. We shall not quarrel about money matters. By the by, you will want some money in advance.'

The worthy doctor put a ten-pound note into the widow's hand, and told her the child's story.

'God will bless you, sir, I am sure,' she said. '*He* told me, sir, that if you would choose any of his best pictures, as a small token of gratitude, and in remembrance of him'—

'Another time, Mrs. Eveleigh, another time. I should like to see the child about once a month, sometimes here, and sometimes at my own house; and if it is ill, send for me directly. The nurse shall bring her to you to-morrow. Take care of yourself. How is the poor man next door? I must just look in upon him. Keep up your spirits, and try to submit to the will of God in all things. I believe your poor husband is in heaven, and that ought to be comfort enough for us. Good-bye.'

'Good-bye, sir, and may the Lord bless and preserve you!' said the poor widow, returning to her solitary apartment, and gazing abstractedly upon the portrait of her husband, who, a clever but unknown artist, had died of consumption about a month before, and over whose protracted sufferings Mr. Timothy Barnard had watched with the tenderness of a parent and the skill of an accomplished surgeon.

CHAPTER III.

'Ah, beauty! of all things on earth,
How many thy charms most desire!
Yet beauty with youth has its birth,
And beauty with youth must expire.'

CHARLES WOLFE.

JESSIE and Pynsent kept their resolution of remaining at home on the evening of Captain Burford's juvenile ball. They started their aunt and the three younger children in the covered car, and wished them a merry evening. Miss Burton looked magnificent and very handsome in her black satin gown, jet ornaments, and black velvet turban and feathers.

'She certainly is beautiful,' said Pynsent, 'and Anna is just like her; like poor papa, too, who was the handsomest man I ever saw, more's the pity.'

'Why "more's the pity," Pynsent?'

'Because the pride of family and of beauty has been the ruin of us all. Aunt Betsey might have been well married fifty times, so Captain Burford told me, if she hadn't fixed her mind on Mr. Michelson, who admired her, but chose to marry a title.'

'I suspect,' said Jessie, smiling, 'that she thinks she shall meet Mr. Michelson to-night. The truth was that he jilted her, and so made papa very bitter against him by so doing. By the by, have you heard that Miss Rutherford has left the Hall? But, Pynsent, we must not lose our quiet evening here; let us go into the corn-fields and look after the men.'

The brother and sister walked away arm in arm. They crossed a meadow, smooth and bright as green velvet, on which the sun cast his evening rays and made it shine like gold. The next field was the corn-field, where men, women, and children were working lustily. Here the women were binding the golden treasure with the strong straw wisp; there the men were forming the sheaves into shocks; and everywhere the children were filling their arms and aprons with the stray ears, their own little store. Smiles and curtseys welcomed the young master and mistress, who were soon as busily at work as the rest.

Pleasantly there rose a harvest song on the evening air, as the labourers prepared to return to their homes; and pleasant the flushed face and cheerful smile of Jessie, as she returned their nods and curtseys, and seated herself by her brother's side; and still more pleasant her clear, sweet voice, as it mingled with the song of the harvesters.

'Now, Jessie, you must stop singing, and talk to me,' said Pynsent, putting his arm affectionately round his sister's waist. 'Do you know that I think a great deal of what papa said about never selling Fairfield?'

'We can never sell it, Pynsent,' said Jessie.

'Then we must work hard to pay off the mortgages which papa and his forefathers raised from time to time. This shall be the end for which I will strive.'

'But,' said Jessie, 'the great drawback is having to pay more than a hundred a year interest, before we can lay by to clear off the principal.'

'And another drawback,' said Pynsent, 'is Aunt Betsey's fifty pounds a year; that has to be raised also, before we can begin to reckon our own income, and the best years the estate doesn't produce more than three hundred and fifty.'

'A thought has struck me,' said Jessie. 'You know Aunt Betsey never used to pay anything for her board as long as papa lived; but now she insists on giving us twenty pounds a year. Suppose we make a point of putting by that twenty pounds, which is clear gain to us, as a beginning.'

'Capital! then we may be able to screw five pounds here and there when the children are provided for. The worst of it is, that it seems so long before I shall begin to work; four or five good years—what an age!'

'After all,' said Jessie thoughtfully, 'I almost agree with Captain Burford in thinking that it would have been best to sell the estate, and invest the money that remains.'

'Very little would remain to us, I fear, Jessie; besides, papa's last wish should be as binding as if it was his last will,—by no means to sell the estate, and never to let an acre of it fall into Mr. Michelson's hands. What I should like would be to get rich, and buy the estate of you four; you could come and keep house for me; Anna will be sure to marry, and the boys will be better provided for.'

'You are "romancing" now, I think, Master Pynsent. But why am I not to marry?'

'Well, you know the Burtons have always been old maids. And that reminds me of Captain Burford's folly about you and Nelson: I hope you don't think of it, Jessie. Nelson will be sure to rise in the army, he is so steady, and he will either marry some beauty or an heiress, take my word for it.'

'How absurd you are, Pynsent!' said Jessie, colouring; 'you talk of Nelson's marrying at seventeen as if he were thirty.'

'Because Captain Burford talks about it and thinks about it,' said Pynsent bluntly, 'and it may make you very uncomfortable some one of these days.'

A silence ensued, during which Jessie looked unusually thoughtful.

'You are quite right, Pynsent,' she said at last. 'Now we had better go home, as the dews are falling, and I have a great deal to do. We must remember that *our* great object is to do all we can for the good of the younger ones; and in the first place, to pay off the mortgages by degrees,—say a hundred pounds at a time. O dear me! it would take four or five years at least to save one hundred, and more than a century to save two thousand. What old people we should be!' Jessie laughed heartily at the picture that presented itself to her imagination, of Pynsent and herself, an old bachelor and old maid, of nearly a hundred years old, living together in the place of their birth.

'*Nil desperandum* is my motto,' said Pynsent.

'Crest, a pill-box; coat-of-arms, three bottles rampant, and a case of surgical instruments couchant?' asked Jessie.

When Jessie was quietly seated at her work, and Pynsent was regaling her ears with some medical case he was reading, Captain Burford's juvenile ball was at its climax. The whole youthful respectability of the town and neighbourhood had assembled, and many of the elders with them. Annabella was, as had been predicted, the beauty of the ball-room; and it was ridiculous to see her surrounded by her throng of little admirers, one saying, 'Now, Anna, dance with me;' another, 'You promised to dance with me next, you know you did;' a third, 'Very well, miss, I won't ask you again,' and so on; whilst the young lady seemed to enjoy it thoroughly.

Anna was a sparkling little beauty, that fascinated at first sight. Black eyes, as bright and piercing as an eagle's; black hair falling in long ringlets down her shoulders; a clear brown complexion and a colour like 'the red, red rose;' lips really like the 'double cherry,' full and pouting; the nose slightly aquiline, but small and delicate. She was a thorough little gipsy, and it was as impossible to see her and not to spoil her, as it would be not to admire her. She was perfectly conscious of all this, and as consummate a little coquette as you could light upon.

The Captain had arranged whist-tables in another room, whither most of the papas and mammas had retired; but a little before supper they came by degrees into the dancing-room. The children were in the heart of an old dance called 'the Sighing Dance,' which was occasioning much anxiety and amusement. A little beau knelt before his chosen belle, sighed, and then whirled her round the room, and finally danced himself into her chair, leaving her to kneel, in her turn, before some other swain, and perform a similar movement with him. Anna had, as usual, more than her share of 'sighers,' and was standing amongst a group of girls of all ages, flushed and fluttering with excitement, waiting to see whom Chatham Michelson would choose. Just at the moment, Mr. Michelson entered the room. Nelson rushed up to him and said, 'Now, Mr. Michelson, you must sigh for some one!' and he led him in front of the little expectant group.

Mr. Michelson knelt on one knee good-humouredly, put his hand on his heart theatrically, looked searchingly upon the many sweet faces before him, gave a long-drawn sigh, and presented his hand to Anna. The child tripped away with him, and danced him to his seat, to the amusement of the bystanders, then stood glancing archly round, as if to see whom she should choose.

'Sigh for me, Anna,' whispered a little boy.

'No, for me,' said another; 'I haven't been out a long time.'

'For me,' said Chatham Michelson.

Anna shook her curls, pointed her toes, and danced up to Mr. Michelson, knelt down, sighed, and was soon whirling that gentleman round. When they had completed their turn, he took her up in his arms and kissed her. Anna was indignant, and struggled to free herself, upon which he sat down and placed her on his knee.

'What is your name, little beauty?' he said, as she resolutely got off his knee.

'Annabella Burton,' she replied.

'I thought so,' said Mr. Michelson, whilst a shade half of admiration, half of dislike, passed over his face. 'Is that tall lady yonder your aunt?'

'Yes,' said Anna. 'I thought you knew her; she knows you very well.'

Anna glanced at her tall, magnificent aunt, who was watching them with an attention so intense that she seemed scarcely to breathe.

'Do you think she would dance with me?' asked Mr. Michelson.

'I daresay she would,' said Anna; 'I will run and ask her;' and off she flew.

Captain Burford and Nelson were forming the last country dance, in which old and young were to join, and Aunt Betsey was debating with herself whether she would dance or not.

'Mr. Michelson wants to know whether you will dance with him,' said Anna abruptly.

A blaze of colour flushed through the *soupçon* of rouge that Aunt Betsey had rubbed in, and proved that she was not too old to blush.

'Decidedly not,' she replied promptly.

'Not with Mr. Michelson?' asked Anna, astonished. 'I am sure you will, aunty; I will bring him.'

And off she tripped again, begged Mr. Michelson to make haste, led him across the room, and planted him before her aunt.

'I know you will, aunty,' she said coaxingly.

'May I have the honour?' said Mr. Michelson. He looked at Miss Burton, she was pale as death: *he* had looked upon the past as past, *she* had not. He was slightly taken aback. The music struck up,—he offered his arm. Scarcely knowing what she did, she accepted it, and he led her to the bottom of the dance.

Twenty years had elapsed since Miss Burton and Mr. Michelson had met. At that time they were as much in love with one

another as their natures would let them. They were not exactly engaged, but everybody supposed they would marry, because the gentleman was his own master, and the lady a reigning beauty. He had money, she had none; but then her family, though decayed, was better than his. His father had won his wealth in trade, and had built Michelson Hall, given his son a first-rate education, and died just as he was one-and-twenty. Miss Burton was a few years older than he was, and in all the full rich beauty of five-and-twenty. He left her, without absolutely proposing to her, to travel; and, being of a nature to devote himself to the last thing or person that attracted his attention by personal beauty, soon forgot her in his devotion to other objects. Beauty, whether in nature or art, was his bane. The last lovely woman, fine picture, well-modelled statue, curiously-wrought jewel,—it mattered not what,—that struck upon his acute sense of what was graceful and pleasing to the eye, fixed his thoughts to intensity, until some new object presented itself to replace the last, and be again replaced. His eye, and not his mind, was attracted. It was therefore no wonder that he soon forgot Miss Burton. He roamed the world in search of variety and amusement several years, during which period he never visited Michelson Hall. In Italy he met Lady Charlotte Newington, a beautiful but portionless flower of the aristocracy. Her rank tempted him to propose for her, and he was accepted. Probably during all these years he scarcely gave a thought to Miss Burton. She, however, ambitious of worldly position, refused many excellent offers, under the impression that when he returned home he would marry her. When she heard that he was actually married, her pride was wounded to the quick. To show the world that she did not care, she determined to accept the first proposal that was made her. An elderly gentleman of some wealth, a widower and a confirmed invalid, came forward; she accepted him. The death of his sister caused a delay, and his own death finally prevented the marriage. These circumstances told sad tales upon Miss Burton's beauty; and, having no more valuable mental attractions to help out her decaying charms, she received no more proposals. Mr. Michelson soon tired of Lady Charlotte, and neglected her. He became a great amateur in pictures, and connoisseur in operas and ballets, not to mention a persevering admirer of the 'belle of the season.' As he had always a certain power over women,—partly from his fascinating manners, partly from his undaunted boldness,—he managed to make a great many of the sex uncomfortable, and his own wife miserable. From London to the Continent, and from the Continent to London, he was constantly

on the move, and seldom visited his place in Somersetshire for more than a few weeks at a time. Some months after his wife's death in Italy, he had come to Michelson Hall, accompanied by her former companion, a Miss Rutherford, a very handsome girl, who held the dubious post of superintendent of his household, and who had been recommended to Lady Charlotte during their residence abroad. His son, a boy of about fifteen, was also at home ; he was destined for the army.

After Lady Charlotte's death, the neighbours called on Mr. Michelson, who appeared to be in great grief. Amongst them was Captain Burford, his old schoolfellow and quondam friend. His son Chatham took a fancy to Captain Burford and Nelson, and they were a good deal together. It may be well to say that the name Chatham was derived from the Earl of Chatham, whose property of Burton Pynsent adjoined that of Michelson Hall. This property of Burton Pynsent had been a sad stitch in the side of the late Mr. Burton of Fairfield, who always imagined that it was of right his, and that the Earl of Chatham was an interloper, because a remote branch of his family, Sir William Pynsent, had left it to the Earl.

Mr. Michelson and Miss Burton now met for the first time since their young days. They stood opposite one another in the country dance, but neither spoke a word. Miss Burton's resolute pride and splendid stiffness awed even Mr. Michelson. She sailed through the dance with him majestically, giving him the tips of her fingers to hold ; sailed to her seat when it was concluded, just touching his arm ; seated herself, with an imperial bow, and left him to his thoughts. And still she was shortly after thinking of the possibility of becoming Mrs. Michelson of Michelson Hall ; whilst he considered her really a very handsome woman, with a carriage quite to be admired for its stateliness and grace.

When the party was breaking up he again got hold of Anna, and gazed upon her childish beauty with admiration.

Captain Burford joined them.

'Tell Jessie I am very angry with her,' said he, 'and that we won't come to the harvest home.'

'Oh, you mustn't be angry, and you must come to the harvest home ; we shall have no fun without you. Will you come to our harvest home, Mr. Michelson ?' said Anna.

Mr. Michelson smiled, and said he should be very happy, but he had no invitation.

'Captain Burford will invite you, and so would Jessie and Pynsent, if they were here. Aunty, will you invite Mr. Michelson

to our harvest home?' cried the child, as Miss Burton, cloaked and shawled, came to fetch her.

She bowed grandly, muttered 'Very happy,' and sailed on, beckoning to Anna to follow her.

The harvest home took place two or three days afterwards. All the children, except Pynsent, were in the wheat-field the greater part of the day, and Nelson was with them. Towards evening Captain Burford and Nelson arrived, and succeeded in bringing Miss Burton to the field. Jessie was here, there, and everywhere, with Nelson pretty generally by her side: now going to the house, to superintend the drawing of cider; now in the field, encouraging the labourers; anon accompanying the teeming waggon to the wheat-mow, patting the honest horses as she went along.

The last waggon-load was on its way homeward, and the little gleaners were busily picking up the scattered ears of corn that it had left behind, when Mr. Michelson, accompanied by a dog, made his appearance through the gate at the farther end of the field. Anna spied him first, and ran towards him.

'Oh, I am so glad you are come!' she exclaimed; 'we shall be going to supper directly, and shall have such fun!'

'But I am not looking for supper,' he replied; 'I have been beating up partridges, against the first of September. Will you let me shoot over your farm?'

The little maiden drew herself up.

'We don't call it a farm, but an estate,' she said.

Mr. Michelson smiled, and walked towards Captain Burford.

'Are you really come to the harvest home?' asked the Captain doubtfully.

'No, I am simply come for a walk.'

Here Jessie appeared, with her apron full of wheat-ears, and her bonnet adorned with corn-flowers and wild convolvulus by the boys.

'Captain Burford, make haste!' she cried. Then suddenly perceiving a stranger, she was about to turn away, when the Captain beckoned to her.

'Miss Jessie Burton, my Nelson's little wife, Mr. Michelson,' said he proudly, as he took the blushing girl by the hand, and presented her in form.

'I told you Mr. Michelson would come, Jessie,' cried Anna triumphantly.

Jessie had a prejudice against Mr. Michelson, and bent, for her, very stiffly; but when that gentleman offered his hand, and hoped they should be better acquainted, she yielded hers, with a virtuous effort to shake off ill-feeling.

The boys appeared, calling lustily for Jessie. She curtseyed to Mr. Michelson, and walked away, followed by him and the Captain. She passed her aunt, who was sailing on with dignity.

'You cannot do less than ask Mr. Michelson in, Jessie,' said she. 'You need not stare so, my dear,—it is mere civility; we used to be acquainted.'

'Papa did not like him, and was not in a position to visit him,' said Jessie simply.

'Years ago, my dear. Besides, common hospitality'—

The gentlemen came up. Mr. Michelson took off his hat grandly; Miss Burton curtseyed magnificently, and Jessie looked at her wheat-ears to hide her laughter.

They all walked on together until they came to the door of the house. Mr. Michelson professed to be taking leave. Miss Burton looked at Jessie.

'Will you walk in, sir?' said she timidly.

Mr. Michelson said, 'Thank you,' and entered, very much to Aunt Betsey's satisfaction.

'Jessie! Jessie! where are you? they are all waiting,' cried Pynsent, starting at seeing a stranger.

'This is the eldest son,' said Captain Burford. 'Pynsent, Mr. Michelson.'

'About the age of Chatham,' said Mr. Michelson; 'strange that their names should have a certain connection.'

After a few complimentary speeches they all went into the kitchen, where the labourers and their wives and children were seated at the huge table, on which was placed a plentiful supper of good homely food. Jessie and the rest of the young ones were soon employed in helping their guests, while Captain Burford cracked jokes and drank cider with them all by turns. Mr. Michelson talked to Miss Burton and looked at Jessie, who, although not handsome, had such a winning smile and bright complexion that he must perforce admire her.

'Uncle James! Uncle James!' shouted Annabella, as a portly man entered the kitchen, glanced round, and retreated.

All the children were after him, and in a few moments hanging about him in the hall. But their entreaties could not induce him to return with them.

'I only looked in, my dearies, for a minute. I am tired to death. I have been harvesting all day, and just came to see what you were all about; my horse is at the door.'

'You must stop, uncle. You never come now; you don't care for us. Only this once, uncle, to please us;' but such like appeals were made in vain,—Uncle James was soon in his saddle again.

'I will come soon, my lovies, and stay a long time. Good-bye; drink my health, mind,' and away he trotted.

'I am sure he saw Mr. Michelson and Aunt Betsey together,' whispered Jessie to Pynsent.

'There is one thing I am determined upon, and that is, I will never fall in love,' said Pynsent.

'You are wanted to lead the "Harvest Home," Jessie,' cried Peter.

A great many songs had been sung, and a variety of toasts given, amongst the jolly party of labourers. Captain Burford fancied they had had enough of the strong 'Zomerzet,' and accordingly looked at his watch.

'Here you are, Jessie. Now for the song!' he said, as she re-entered the kitchen.

She began the following harvest song, in the chorus to which everybody present joined. The old kitchen echoed with the sounds, and the hams and flitches in the raft shook, so vigorously was it executed by the party.

HARVEST HOME.

Reap, boys, reap! and let the sharpened sickle
Cut down cheerily the full-eared grain;
'Ware dark clouds,—the weather it is fickle:
Reap, boys, reap, and let's forestall the rain:
Then shall we
Worthily
Earn our Harvest Home.

Work, boys, work! and bind the golden treasure
Quickly up into the teeming sheaves;
Raise the shocks! we all shall feel the pleasure
That hard labouring behind it leaves:
Then shall we
Worthily
Earn our Harvest Home.

Load, boys, load! and fill the roomy waggon,
Then drive carefully the patient team;
Help, all hands, and let's forego the flagon
Till old Sol withdraws his latest beam:
So shall we
Steadily
Earn our Harvest Home.

Drink, boys, drink! our labour it is ended;
Blow, ye winds, and fall, ye rain and hail:
Drink, boys, drink! our treasure is defended,
Ready now for winnow and for flail:
Thus have we
Honestly
Earned our Harvest Home.

CHAPTER IV.

'Nay, shrink not from the word "farewell,"
As if 'twere friendship's final knell;
Such fears may prove but vain:
So changeful is life's fleeting day,—
Whene'er we sever, hope may say,
"We part to meet again."'—BARTON.

IN the course of a few months the happy family at Fairfield was scattered, and several of its members turned adrift upon the wide, wild ocean of life, to begin their nautical education, and learn as best they might how to battle with the elements, and guide their ship to the various ports at which she was destined to stop during her course, supposing she was not wrecked at her outset.

The party who met together to laugh at the jovial uproar of a harvest-home, were by the following New Year's Day reduced to one-half. Mr. Michelson was the first to take his departure. All the butler's inquiries after Miss Rutherford proved unavailing; and Mr. Michelson went to London, and thence abroad, in less than a month after her sudden departure. He had called once or twice at Fairfield, and managed to revive all Miss Burton's ancient ambitious hopes. Laugh not, ye youthful belles, at poor Aunt Betsey, who, on the very shady side of forty, has been getting up her old taste for flirtation, her old beauty, and her old affection, at sight of her old lover. It is melancholy to see life so wasted, and yet more melancholy to know that the still fascinating lover is only amusing himself with her weakness and laughing at her folly. Oh, ye youthful belles, pity but do not scorn Aunt Betsey; and above all, lay in such a store of mental riches yourselves during the years of your grace and loveliness, that you may have what she has not when your charms fade,—a well-cultivated and religious mind.

Nelson was the next to leave. With various hopes and fears, aspirations and regrets, he bade farewell to his native town and native country. His father kept a brave face at the parting, but was sad at heart. Ten years in India! Before his boy returned from his long self-exile, he might be in his grave. Nelson, too, began to realize that melancholy truth when it was too late, and his courage sank when he thought of it. Poor Jessie also! she did not hide her tears, but let them fall on her sister's face when she nestled up to her, sobbing her own child-heart out in her attempts at consolation. They all loved and esteemed the quiet, straightforward, resolute Nelson, as boys and girls always esteem

those who, whilst they attend to their studies, still prove themselves bold and gallant. Jessie had worked him a purse, into which Anna had put her only crooked sixpence for luck, which he was never to take out of the purse if he were ever so poor. He had begged a tress of Jessie's bright golden hair, and promised her a tiger's skin in return for it; at which she shuddered, and entreated him not to run into danger. Very natural and very affecting were the little boy and girl tokens of friendship exchanged between the pair; and Captain Burford was pleased to see that the prospect of separation warmed what he called his son's 'north-easters,' meaning his feelings, 'into a more south-westerly breeze.'

Captain Burford's last present to his son was the Holy Bible, in which he had written the words, 'Fight the good fight of faith.'

'Read it, boy, and never be ashamed of it,' he said solemnly. 'I have weathered many a storm, and been on strange waters, but have always found that book my surest compass.'

And so Nelson departed.

Peter was the next to leave the house of his birth, and to brave the dangers of the ocean. He went as midshipman in a gallant ship, under a gallant commander, and was too brave to shed a tear, albeit he made many wry faces to restrain it. Everybody missed the merry, joyous Peter, and none so much as his twin-sister Anna. But her turn came next.

Her sister had been hard at work for her ever since the arrival of their Uncle Timothy's letter. How to make smart new frocks out of their poor mamma's dresses, now for the first time brought to light; how to cut and contrive pieces of muslin and calico to the best advantage, was an addition to Jessie's daily tasks, which filled up the small leisure she might have found for wondering whether Nelson would think of her when absent. Moreover, Anna was so wild and wilful, that her loving heart mourned when she considered that the discipline of a school was not, perhaps, the best kind of training for her; and she spent many a stray half-hour in talking tenderly to the child, and praying her to be good.

Captain Burford took his little ward to London. They had a pleasant but fatiguing journey. Anna was much admired, much questioned, and much flattered by her different coach companions, and soon recovered her spirits. She talked incessantly until she fell asleep at night in Captain Burford's arms, and awoke in the early morning in London.

'5 Duke Street,' said Captain Burford to the driver of the hackney-coach; cabs were not then as plentiful as they are now, and railways were not.

Uncle Timothy in his dining-room, by a large fire, fast asleep in his easy-chair, a fine tabby cat asleep on his knee; the table covered with a tea and coffee service; cold meat on the sideboard, and candles burnt low. A ring at the door-bell. Up starts Uncle Timothy,—down tumbles Puss in surprise. Such a thundering knock! Out goes Uncle Timothy, and stumbles over his housekeeper, muttering, 'Bless me! bless me!' In blusters Captain Burford, shakes hands with Uncle Timothy, pushes Anna forward, and stands still to see what impression she makes.

'Come in, little girl, come in,' is the only visible, or rather audible effect of the impression.

Anna goes in, and then holds out her hand, and says, 'How do you do, Uncle Timothy? thank you for putting me to school.'

So far Jessie had tutored her, but not to restrain the tears that came into her eyes.

Uncle Timothy shook hands with her, looked at her, and exclaimed,—

'Bless me! the father and aunt all over.'

'Wouldn't you like to come up-stairs, miss?' said the housekeeper.

'Oh, very much indeed!' said poor Anna, hastening out of the room.

No sooner was she up-stairs than she began to cry very heartily.

'Don't cry, that's a dear,' said Mrs. Hicks, the housekeeper. 'There ain't a better, kinder man in the world than your uncle; only he's odd at first.'

'I can't stay here—I must go home again—I won't go to school,' said Anna.

'It's all new to you now, my dear, but you will soon get used to everything. We'll go and see London by and by, and all the fine sights. I daresay you never saw a Christmas pantomime?'

'A what?' said Anna, brightening up.

'Oh, such a sight! we shall see. But now take off your bonnet. Dear, dear, there's curls!'

And so Mrs. Hicks coaxed and flattered Anna into tranquillity, and finally conducted her down to breakfast.

Uncle Timothy shakes hands with her again, and pats her on the head; and good Captain Burford gives her a hearty kiss, which nearly makes her cry again; but she thinks of the Christmas pantomime and all the London sights, and cheers up. Uncle Timothy and Captain Burford, though to all appearance very different sort of people, have still many points of resem-

blance. They soon get on very well together, and whilst they are talking, Anna makes a very good breakfast; after which the housekeeper insists on her going to bed. She resists at first, but when assured that she will be fit for no sight-seeing unless she sleeps, she resigns herself, and is soon dreaming of Fairfield, the coach, and London shows.

When she awoke the gentlemen were both out, but Mrs. Hicks was commissioned to amuse her, and accordingly took her to see Madame Tussaud's wax-work. In the evening she went with her uncle and Captain Burford to the play, and it is difficult to say whether Captain Burford or his little ward drew down the most scandal on their worthy host. The Captain's laughter was so loud that it drowned Anna's; but the pair attracted the attention of their neighbours by the unfashionable exuberance of their merriment, and delighted Mr. Barnard beyond expression thereby.

Anna rose the following morning with far different feelings: she was to go to school. She could eat no breakfast, and Uncle Timothy looked compassionately at her through his spectacles.

'You must come and see me, or rather Mrs. Hicks,' he said, 'every holiday; I daresay Miss Primmerton will allow you.'

'Oh! thank you, Uncle Timothy,' said Anna, letting fall the tears that she had been trying hard to restrain. 'Do you think I may come to-morrow?'

'We shall see,' said Uncle Timothy.

'Not if you go there in tears,' suggested Captain Burford.

Poor Anna tried to smile, but the tears would fall. Uncle Timothy fidgeted, and said he had a patient to see before he could go with his niece to Miss Primmerton's establishment. He went out, and came back with his pockets looking much larger than when he left. He drew forth a gilt book, and then a nondescript ornament, and finally a packet of sweetmeats; and before he had completed these operations, a shopboy came with the most perfect of work-boxes, and all these purchases were duly presented to Anna. The little girl's bright black eyes, sparkling with tear-drops, met the kind glance of her relative, and in a moment, for the first time, her arms were round his neck, and her lips on his cheek.

'Bless me! bless me!' said Uncle Timothy in a flurry, adjusting his wig first, and then putting his arm tenderly round her waist.

'She takes one by storm always,' said Captain Burford. 'Now, little minx, run away, and dry your tears.'

Anna went up-stairs.

'I wish she were not so like her father's family,' said

Uncle Timothy. 'That beauty! that beauty! it is a sad temptation.'

'The eldest girl is the picture of her mother,' said Captain Burford. 'There never was such a girl as my Jessie. She and my son Nelson are engaged.'

'What, already?' asked Mr. Barnard, surprised.

Anna interrupted the reply. She came in smiling, and, going up to Uncle Timothy, told him that she liked her work-box very much, that the book was a beautiful story, and that she should take the sweetmeats to school, to give her play-fellows.

'But may I leave my book here, to read on holidays?' she added, 'because I mean to work at school.'

'To be sure,' said Uncle Timothy, patting her on the head.

They drove to Miss Primmerton's establishment, situated near Kensington Gardens. They were shown into a handsome drawing-room, and Miss Primmerton soon appeared. She was a short lady, very short; upright, very upright in person, and doubtless in principles. She had very prominent features, and a thin face; wore spectacles, and carried an eyeglass. Her eyes were large and dark; and whether it was that they projected beyond the eyelids, and so were by nature intended to see more than other eyes, or whether a habit of general observation had given them peculiar power, certain it is that they seemed to look every way at the same time. For instance, although she professed to be talking principally to Mr. Barnard, Captain Burford felt sure that she was addressing him, and Anna could have shrunk into an egg-shell, to avoid the searching side-looks that fell upon her. It need scarcely be said that the head of a first-rate West End school was gifted with, or had acquired, perfect manners; only the very lax would have considered them too stiff, and the impertinent too scholastic. I must add, as one of the supporters of Miss Primmerton's reputation for gentility, that she did not consider herself a schoolmistress, or her house a school; she objected to the title of governess as applied to herself, and annihilated by a glance everybody who mentioned her as in any way connected with a seminary or establishment. What she did call herself or her household it would be difficult to say, but she wished the whole to be considered as a 'family.' The young ladies used to give it the title of the 'Happy Family,' one of them having so named it after a certain caged collection of creatures to be seen near the National Gallery. As the cat always appeared to them the chief of that 'happy family,' they called Miss Primmerton 'Puss;' the head English teacher was honoured by being 'the Owl,' or 'Minerva;' and a good-tempered Frenchwoman was 'Guinea-pig;' the girls themselves

and one or two under-teachers, bore the various denominations of the rats, mice, small birds, etc., of that united party.

'Miss Burton is to be entirely under my charge for four years, as a member of my family, and to be taught whatever I think her capable of acquiring?' said Miss Primmerton.

'Just so,' replied Mr. Barnard. 'Should it be well for her to assist in your school as a teacher afterwards, I suppose she would be still treated like your other pupils?'

'Our little circle can scarcely be termed a school; we are a limited number, and quite a family party.' Miss Primmerton said this with dignity, and terrified her last 'young friend' by a side glance from the prominent orbs.

'The deuce is in it,' said the Captain gruffly, who had taken an aversion to Miss Primmerton, 'if a school isn't a school all the world over. Some are good and some are bad; yours, ma'am, I hear, is first-rate.'

Miss Primmerton, with increased dignity, growing red, and looking quite tall,—

'We have great advantages. Bochsa has consented to give instructions on the harp. I have, with immense difficulty, prevailed on Herz to give occasional piano lessons. I have secured Harding for drawing, and Cruvelli for singing. We have a French teacher in the house, so that nothing but French is spoken amongst us; and a first-rate Italian master.'

The Captain shrugged his shoulders, and looked at Anna.

'You will astonish the natives when you come back, child,' he said. 'I hope, ma'am, you will teach her geography and the use of the compass, for she has determined upon being a sailor.'

'I shall be glad to see my niece whenever there is a holiday,' said Mr. Barnard, 'and will send for her, if she will drop me a line.'

'I allow only one afternoon every month: holidays interfere with studies. Friends are requested to be kind enough to call on a Saturday. I rarely permit my young friends to see any one at other uncertain periods: it unfits them for their course of daily duties. I should also mention that I make a point of reading every letter and note that either leaves or enters my house.'

Poor Anna! she thought of her diary, of pouring out her heart to Jessie: this was a cruel disappointment to begin with.

'Madam,' said the Captain, 'do you think her brothers and sister will write anything improper to the child, or she to them? Zounds! that is a hard rule; sailors are better off than that.'

'It is mine, sir. It prevents much mischief, that you may

not, perhaps, understand; and there ought not to be any secrets between young people and a friend placed in my position.'

'I think, Captain,' said Uncle Timothy, who began to fear a breeze, 'that we are detaining Miss Primmerton. When shall I see my little niece, madam?'

'She can go to you the first Saturday of the ensuing month. If you will excuse my saying so, I consider that it would be better for her not to see you again before that period.'

The tears came into Anna's eyes. Captain Burford went to her, and began to condole with her. Uncle Timothy said he hoped she would be a good little girl; then, turning gently to Miss Primmerton, he added in an undertone aside, 'I am sure, madam, you will be kind to her. She is an orphan, and that is recommendation enough. We shall put implicit faith in you. If she is ill, and if you have no objection, I should be glad to be allowed to attend upon her; and if I can ever be of service to you in a professional way, I shall be very happy. I am thankful to have made my fortune, and therefore seldom need fees, except from those who can well afford it.'

Miss Primmerton softened. Real kind feeling soon reaches the heart, and hers was not harder by nature than others, only the formality, that she considered a duty, hid whatever original warmth she still retained.

'You may depend on me,' she said gravely, 'and I am much obliged to you for your kind offer. What is your name, my dear?' turning to Anna, and taking her hand.

'Annabella, ma'am,' said the child, looking up through her tears.

'I hope, Annabella, we shall be very good friends,' said Miss Primmerton, with formal kindness.

'By Jove, you gave that old hag a fee, instead of taking one, Doctor,' said Captain Burford, when he had given Anna her last kiss, and was seated by Uncle Timothy in the carriage. 'If you are so fascinating, she will think you have fallen in love with her.'

'O no! upon my honour, I only'— said the Doctor, quite confused. The bare idea of falling in love always upset him.

Captain Burford laughed heartily.

'I can't bear her,' he said, when he ceased; 'that dear child's spirit will be broken.'

The 'dear child' was taken to her bedroom by Miss Primmerton, followed thither by her boxes and one of the teachers. There were two neat beds without curtains, two chests of drawers, two wash-hand stands,—in short, everything requisite for two young ladies.

'You will be required to be very neat; to keep your drawers in order, and to mend your clothes, under the direction of Miss Meek,' said Miss Primmerton to Anna.

Miss Meek, the young lady present, looked as though her nature did not belie her name.

'You must rise at six, be particular in your dress and person, and you must be in bed at half-past nine. I allow no noise in your bedrooms. The young lady who sleeps in this room is very quiet. Miss Meek, will you see that Miss Burton's clothes are arranged, and then bring her to the study?'

Having concluded her ordinary directions, Miss Primmerton left the room. Anna looked at Miss Meek, and, seeing something tearful in the expression of her face, began to cry. Miss Meek seemed much inclined to join her, but, checking herself, asked her to begin to unpack her clothes. The box was unlocked, and the chest of drawers soon filled. Miss Meek brushed Anna's long curls for her, and gave her a kiss, which voluntary act occasioned more tears.

They went down to the study. Miss Primmerton came forward, and, taking Anna by the hand, formally introduced her to some nine or ten girls, of ages varying from twelve to seventeen, who all looked up at her from their books, muttered 'How do you do?' and continued to stare at her until Miss Primmerton told them, like Dr. Blimber, 'to resume their studies.' Miss Primmerton's number was twelve, but the others were with masters. Anna was then examined as to her acquirements, and, being found sadly deficient, was given over to Miss Meek for the present.

Her attention was soon engrossed by what she considered the wonderful learning of the 'family.' The unknown tongues they talked, the lessons they learned, the readings they read, the themes they composed, the drawings they drew, the music they played, cast her into a perfect dream of amazement and terror. How should she ever manage to get through one tithe of such a vast amount of erudition? When the dinner-hour came, and she laid down the First French Lesson-book, in which Miss Meek had been patiently looking, in the flattering notion that Anna was doing the same, she hoped there might be a respite. No such thing: French was indefatigably spoken by the few who ventured to speak, and Miss Primmerton's eyes were more omnipresent than ever. She felt that they saw every mouthful she ate, and she was afraid of choking beneath their influence.

'Miss Colville,' or 'Mademoiselle Colville,' for it was all in French, 'how you stoop!' said Miss Primmerton.

Miss Colville drew up.

'My dear Miss Nicholson, pray do not eat in that voracious manner!'—'Shall I give you some more beef, Miss Mary?'—'You poke your head like a horse, Miss Grant!'—and so on.

Anna heard one young lady, who sat next her, murmur to another, 'Poor Puss!'

'What were you saying, mademoiselle?'

'Nothing, ma'am,' was the reply.

The dinner was excellent. No young lady could possibly complain at home that she had not enough to eat, or that the viands were ill-served or ill-cooked. Two neat parlour-maids waited, who put Anna into a great fright when they came for her plate, and occasioned Miss Primmerton's eyes to be turned full upon her. The kind French teacher, who was a married woman, and had a husband and children in her own country, compassionated Anna, and spoke to her once or twice in broken English, but she was too much frightened to reply. She was so awkward, that Miss Primmerton was panting to speak to her, and when she upset a few drops of water on the cloth, that excellent lady could restrain herself no longer, but said,—

'My dear Miss Annabella, you must be careful.'

The eleven young ladies looked at Anna, which made her blush scarlet, and one of them said, '*Qu'elle est jolie, la petite!*' which drew from Miss Primmerton the excellent but trite motto, '*La beauté n'est que passagère, mais la bonté dure.*'

Anna knew they were talking of her, and was ready to cry: it was so very hard, she thought, to be in England and yet not understand a word that was spoken.

After dinner Miss Primmerton left them with a teacher for about ten minutes. They did not appear to be afraid of the teacher, so they gave vent to their long-suppressed conversation, some in French, some in English, as the '*Français, mes-demoiselles!*' of the teacher was unheeded. One delicate-looking, pretty girl came up to the corner where Anna had ensconced herself, and began to talk to her kindly. Anna's heart was opened at once, and her companion had already learned how many relatives she had, where she lived, and much more, when Miss Primmerton appeared, and caused a dead silence.

Miss Primmerton ordered a walk in Kensington Gardens, and the young ladies obeyed. Anna was fortunate in being consigned to the companionship of Louisa Colville, the pretty girl who had previously spoken to her, but was much disappointed when she found that they were obliged to walk primly, two and two; to attend to their carriage and their toes; requested not to look about them, and to speak little and quietly. They returned home with cold fingers and red noses, to set to work again.

How could she learn that French lesson? she spelt it in English, and could make nothing of it; she did not know what the accents were. Louisa Colville read it over to her a great many times, and somehow or other she caught it by ear, and said it, in fear and trembling, to Miss Primmerton herself, who praised her, and said in French that she seemed a quick child.

They had tea, at which it was their custom to speak Italian; so the conversation was even less general than at dinner, and Miss Primmerton's eyes more omnipresent than ever.

'Miss Colville, your nose will be literally in the butter by and by,' she remarked amongst other things, taking up her eyeglass in addition to her spectacles.

Miss Colville was frequently a victim, because she was rather shy, rather awkward, and sometimes rather pert.

'I am so near-sighted, ma'am, and I don't wear spectacles; I wish I did, and an eyeglass,' was the reply.

The girls tittered, and Miss Primmerton grew red.

'Miss Colville, you are pert,' said Miss Primmerton, growing redder.

'I beg your pardon, ma'am,' said Miss Colville, 'I did not intend to be pert, but merely to say that I was near-sighted.'

Miss Primmerton was reduced to silence, and they soon returned to their studies. Even the evening was devoted to learning, and, seated round the back drawing-room tables, they read instructive books, and were questioned on what they read, by way of amusement. Miss Primmerton did her duty, and more than her duty; but she said that as hers was a finishing 'family,' no time was to be lost. They went to bed at half-past eight, and enjoyed half an hour's freedom. Louisa Colville was Anna's fellow-lodger. Miss Primmerton had put them together as a punishment to Miss Colville, who had been the means of inducing another young lady into nocturnal conversations, and was therefore separated from her. She was too anxious to discover Anna's private history, to talk much of the 'Family,' but she assured her that 'Miss Primmerton was a worthy old cat, only she was too much given to prowling, mousing, and scratching, and could see in the dark.'

Miss Primmerton came precisely at half-past nine to extinguish the light. Before doing so she flashed the candle across the faces of the two girls, in order to see whether they were asleep; and, having thus concluded the duties of her very hard day, she descended to the study, and regaled herself and principal teachers with something comfortable in the eating and drinking way.

Anna meanwhile had pretended to be asleep, until her companion was asleep, and then she slipped quietly out of bed, knelt

down, and prayed God to bless all the dear friends she had left behind her, Uncle Timothy, and Nelson, far away on the great ocean. She leaned her face on the bed, and let her tears melt into it. She asked to be made good, and then again prayed for her dear sister. Oh! she had never known how much she loved her until that sad day. Poor child! perhaps the first day of real trial that she had ever passed,—unshared, unsoftened trial. School is truly an epitome of the world, the first hard stage in the difficult course of life.

CHAPTER V.

'Though, by sickly taste betrayed,
Some will dispraise the lovely maid,
With fearless pride I say
That she is healthful, fleet, and strong,
And down the rocks can leap along,
Like rivulets in May.

'And she hath smiles to earth unknown,
Smiles that with motion of their own
Do spread, and sink, and rise;
That come and go with endless play,
And ever, as they pass away,
Are hidden in her eyes.'—WORDSWORTH.

'UNCLE TIMOTHY, I did not know that you had a baby,' said Anna to her uncle, on that happy 'first Saturday of the month,' named by Miss Primmerton as the holiday.

'My dear, what do you mean?' said Uncle Timothy, getting very red.

'Oh! that dear little baby that went away when you were out. I wanted to keep it, but the lady said, as she had seen you, she would not stay any longer. Is that your wife, Uncle Timothy?'

'Bless me! bless me! what odd questions! My dear, the baby is my ward, and the lady is taking care of her. You must ask no more questions, and I will take you to see her next month.'

'Very well, Uncle Timothy. But she is such a sweet baby, and she came to me directly, and laughed, and pulled my hair. And such a nice lady, Uncle Timothy!—is she her mother? Oh! I forgot, I must not ask any questions.'

'And how do you like school and Miss Primmerton, my dear?'

'Not very much, Uncle Timothy. There is so much to learn, and I am so backward, Miss Primmerton says. It is all day long

reading, and writing, and grammar, and geography, and history, and that hard word about the gods and goddesses that I couldn't read; and another about the moon, and stars, and suns; and then music, and French, and drawing. And Sundays there are the sermons to write out, and questions to answer out of the Bible, and hymns, and collects, and catechism, and sacred reading; so much more than I used to do with Jessie, and yet I felt better with her, I don't know why.'

Uncle Timothy guessed why, but said nothing.

'And how do you like your schoolfellows, my dear?' he asked.

'Very well—some of them. A great many tease me, and laugh at me when I can't learn, and make fun of my old-fashioned frocks. But I love Louisa Colville dearly.'

'And who is she?'

'She sleeps in my room. Her papa and mamma are in India, where Nelson is gone. I hope they will know Nelson. Louisa has been with Miss Primmerton ever since she was seven, and now she is past thirteen, and she stays the holidays, which is very dull.'

'Have you written home, my dear?'

'Yes. Oh, such a stiff letter! Miss Primmerton saw it, and made me alter it, and write it like a copy slip. Uncle Timothy, will you let me write a letter here? There will be no harm in that, you know, because Miss Primmerton only said that she saw all the letters that left her house, but she needn't see those that leave yours.'

Uncle Timothy was half afraid there was a little sophistry in this reasoning, but he readily granted Anna's request, and began to prepare the writing materials at once.

Whilst Anna was pouring out her heart, in very bad spelling and worse writing, to her sister, Uncle Timothy was in close conversation with Mrs. Hicks, after which he again went to see patients. When Anna had completed her letter, Mrs. Hicks came to take her for a walk. They went into Bond Street, and Mrs. Hicks conducted her to the private door of a house, on which was inscribed, 'Madlle. Fourbillon, milliner and dressmaker.' They were shown up-stairs, and Madlle. Fourbillon was requested to take Anna's measure for two new frocks, with corresponding walking apparel. She was told to make them simple and good; and Mrs. Hicks informed her that the young lady was a niece of Mr. Timothy Barnard, of Duke Street. Uncle Timothy would certainly have called Madlle. Fourbillon demonstrative. She clasped her hands, and exclaimed, 'The worthy man! The superior medicine! The distinguished cheerurgeon! He attend me, meess, and charge me noting.'

'The girls will not laugh at my old-fashioned frocks now,' said Anna, when she returned to Duke Street.

'But, my deary,' said Uncle Timothy, 'you must not be proud of the new ones. Neat clothes are all very well, but you must remember that it is "a meek and quiet spirit" that God loves.'

'That is what mamma used to say, and Jessie says sometimes. But the girls like fine clothes and grand people. I tell them about Mr. Michelson. They wouldn't believe me when I said we ought to have the great house that the Earl of Chatham used to live in.'

Uncle Timothy could not help smiling, whilst he shook his head, and murmured to the bookshelf, 'The old leaven, alas! Pride of beauty, pride of family, and nothing else! God help you, poor child! man cannot.'

'I didn't mean to do wrong, Uncle Timothy.'

'No, my dear, I am sure of that. But dinner is ready, and we must not forget that you must be home before nine o'clock.'

'Not home, Uncle Timothy, at school. School is not like home, though Miss Primmerton says it is.'

Anna made such progress in her studies as a child of quick abilities but unstudious nature generally does. She got on rapidly with all that gave her no trouble. She soon learned to speak French fluently, but shed innumerable tears over the easiest exercises in that language. She picked up more Italian, orally, than many bigger girls, because it entered into her mind, she knew not how. She managed to play pretty tunes by ear, but was ages before she learned the first scale, or Cramer's first lesson, by note. She read and wrote carelessly, and rarely managed to say a perfect lesson, unless Madame or Louisa Colville taught it to her first. She was alternately teased and spoiled by the girls, scolded and secretly petted by Miss Primmerton,—in short, educated in the very way she ought not to have been; sometimes allowed the free vent of her hot, quick temper, at others punished for the display of it, instead of being quietly and consistently checked and reasoned with, as Jessie had tried to do.

She was to spend her summer holidays at home, and her winter ones at her uncle's. In spite of his affirmed dislike to the society of children, Uncle Timothy really liked to have her with him, and by degrees fell into the common failing of spoiling her.

She generally saw Mrs. Eveleigh and the baby, who had been christened Sophia, during her monthly holiday, and her greatest treat was to be driven by Uncle Timothy to Peckham, and to

spend the half-hour allotted, in talking to the one and caressing the other.

The midsummer holidays came at last, and she was once more with her darling Jessie, Pynsent, Charley, Aunt Betsey, and Captain Burford. Oh, how they flew by, those holidays! She found little alteration at home. Pynsent and Jessie were as steady as ever, and had put the first ten pounds into the bank, towards the paying off of the two thousand pounds mortgage. Jessie had had a beautiful letter from Nelson, and Captain Burford more than one, and Peter, her twin brother, was on the seas, a midshipman.

Thus several years passed, the events of which, although commonplace enough, were important to the various actors in our little drama. Pynsent finished his apprenticeship to the doctor, and many were the consultations between him, Jessie, Uncle James, and Captain Burford, upon the best means of raising money to enable him to study in London. Captain Burford proposed writing to Mr. Barnard for advice, but Pynsent negatived this, and said that he would rather go to London unknown to his uncle, and try to get on by himself. Captain Burford, not being a man of the world, and having a great notion of young people's roughing it, readily assented to this scheme, as did Mr. Barnard the elder, who helped to raise the necessary funds. It was thought better to keep Anna in the dark respecting Pynsent's movements, as they all knew she would never be able to conceal his being in London from her uncle. So Pynsent went to London, and took a small cheap lodging in the neighbourhood of Guy's Hospital, being resolved to eschew the gaieties of town as he would the plague, and to devote himself to all manner of hideous skeletons and terrific dissections.

Meanwhile Jessie laboured cheerfully for all, and the quantity of work that she got through every day was surprising. How she kept house and directed the farm business, with the assistance of Uncle James, who had a farm not very far off, and bore with Aunt Betsey's humours, was truly praiseworthy. She wrote a beautiful hand; was a first-rate accountant; did plain work to perfection; knew how to embroider, but never had time for it; could make puddings and pies, and preserves and jellies, and syllabubs and junkets; understood all about butter-making, bread-making, cheese-making, and cider-making; was a capital florist, and knew a good deal practically, and by books, concerning the culture of bees; could rear and feed turkeys, geese, ducks, chickens, and pigeons, and had a very superior way of bringing up young calves. Moreover, she could dance country

dances and reels well and gracefully, and could make one, if absolutely wanted, in a quadrille; she could sing ballads to perfection without any accompaniment; and as to poetry, I verily believe she could recite almost every piece she had ever read. Her father had collected some very good books of his day, and with these she was well acquainted. The *Spectator* and *Rambler* were her especial favourites; and probably it was from reading those excellent works that she had acquired the power of expressing herself with clearness and even elegance when she wrote. *Percy's Reliques* and the *Elegant Extracts* had a peculiar charm for her; and perhaps it was to the old ballads, and her turn for poetry, that she was indebted for the vein of romance that ran almost unsuspected through the fine common sense for which she was remarkable. As Sunday was her only leisure day, she read more books of a religious nature than of any other; and those books, thanks to her father's pure taste, were of the best description. Jeremy Taylor was the writer she loved best, next to the inspired authors of the Bible. She lost herself in his stupendous mind, and found matter for delightful reflection during the week in the sublime poetry in which he clothed his thoughts. Explanations of the prophecies, and all works that threw a light on the obscure passages of sacred writ, were particularly attractive to her; and it was a pleasant thing, of a Sunday evening, to see her seated at a small table near the parlour window, with her mother's large Bible open before her, containing notes and marginal references, on her right hand some old divine, to whom she had been referring, and on her left the ponderous folio of Jeremy Taylor's sermons. Aunt Betsey, with her Prayer Book open near her, might be dozing in the arm-chair; Charley, with his elbows on the table, and his head resting on his hands, might be gazing entranced on one of the pictures in the large family Bible, illustrated from paintings of the old masters, and the tabby cat might be purring on the cushioned window-seat.

Such was the family picture on the evening of the Sunday on which Charley had completed his fourteenth, and entered on his fifteenth year. Captain Burford had presented him with a beautiful paint-box, which was conspicuously placed on a side table; and Uncle James had given him the Farmer's Calendar, the plates of which he admired more than the chapters.

'Jessie, can you talk to me a little?' said the boy.

Jessie was deep in one of the prophecies of Isaiah, but she said, 'Yes, dear,' cheerfully, and looked up from her book.

'Do you know there is an artist in the town, who takes likenesses and gives lessons in drawing?' said Charley.

'Really!' exclaimed Jessie; 'how I wish you could have some lessons!'

The Captain's head was suddenly poked in at the window, and Jessie and Charley both flew to open the door. He said he had left an acquaintance round the corner, who would not come to the house until he had obtained permission from its inmates.

'Any friend of yours, you know, Captain Burford'—said Jessie.

The Captain disappeared, and soon returned, accompanied by a stranger. This was the identical artist.

'Jessie, this is Mr. Snagrell, a first-rate artist,' said Captain Burford. 'Mr. Snagrell, this is Miss Burton and the little boy I was talking to you about, who is such a clever drawer.'

The young man bowed, and said,—

'You mistake, sair, my name is Sangarelli. I am one Italian.'

'I beg your pardon, Mr. Snagrelli,' said the Captain. 'Charley, run and fetch your drawing-book; I want to show Mr. Snagrell your drawings.'

Charley obeyed, and soon returned with his best productions.

The first that Signor Sangarelli took up was a sketch of cattle, rough in outline, hastily done, and little shaded. He was surprised, but made no remark. The next was a picture of Fairfield, correct, but laboured in the shading, and coloured with bad paint; still the lights and shadows were carefully studied. The next was Charley's favourite subject, a sketch of Jessie. The expression was caught, and the finishing touches were quite artistic. Signor Sangarelli looked at it and at Jessie alternately.

'Vera good,' he said at last.

The various sketches of cattle and rural scenery were decidedly the best, and Signor Sangarelli said that they all showed great talent.

'What are your charges for instruction?' asked Captain Burford.

'Five shillings a lesson,' was the reply.

'I am afraid that is more than we can afford,' said Jessie in her straightforward way; 'but we will think it over to-morrow, and let you know. Sunday is not quite the day for these matters.'

'You are right, my dear,' said Captain Burford; 'I hope Nelson will always be led by you.'

'Oh! I will say half-a-crown a lesson to a brother artist,' said Signor Sangarelli eagerly. 'I shall not be in these parts long, so I will come to-morrow, and twice more in the week.'

Jessie thought this a summary mode of proceeding, but did not object, and the matter was settled.

CHAPTER VI.

'Twas hard from those I loved to go,
Who knelt around my bed,
Whose tears bedewed my burning brow,
Whose arms upheld my head.

'As fading from my dizzy view,
I sought their forms in vain,
The bitterness of death I knew,
And groaned to live again.'—HEBER.

'IF there is no means of my being made an artist, Jessie, I will be a farmer,' said Charley one day to his sister, during an anxious conversation that they were having on his future prospects. 'Next to painting, I love the country; and I could help you best by learning regularly to farm. Besides, I could still study my art, and might make something of myself by and by.'

'I am afraid, my dear boy, that you must strive to be either one thing or the other. We have not the means, and do not know how to let you regularly study painting; so if farming is your next inclination, you had better take Uncle James's offer, and go to him for a few years. His is such an immense farm, that you would learn more there in a month than you could here in a twelvemonth.'

'Time will prove, Jessie,' said Charley sadly, 'but the sooner I begin something the better.'

Jessie looked fondly into her youngest and dearest brother's face. It was not a very handsome, but it was a most intellectual countenance. Deep-set grey eyes, with eyebrows that threatened to be rather bushy, gleamed from beneath a broad forehead. There was already a slight contraction between the eyebrows, which, to judge from his pale thin cheeks, you would have fancied the fruit of suffering; and the compression of the mouth you would have attributed to the same cause. But Charles, although always a delicate boy, had never endured much bodily pain. The quickness of eye, the working nostril, the thoughtful brows, the mouth with its expression of character, denoted the early struggles of mind; and the tall thin figure bespoke the youth of nineteen rather than of fifteen years old.

Captain Burford and Jessie had both come to the conclusion that if he followed the bent of his inclination, he would soon kill himself by study, and they fancied that, to save his life, it should be made as active as possible. They had, moreover, no means

whatever of forwarding his plan of becoming an artist by profession, and did not even know the way to set about it. They considered that he could not do a better thing for his health and strength, than accept Mr. James Barnard's offer of going to him to study practical farming; and accordingly to his uncle he went.

This uncle was, like his brother Timothy, a bachelor, and a decided oddity. In his youth he had been very much smitten by Miss Betsey Burton and her beauty, and, having been contemptuously refused by that lady, he had eschewed the society of females, given himself up to farming and hunting, his dogs, and a few old friends. He did not often visit Fairfield, because he had never wholly healed the wound Cupid had inflicted, and the sight of Miss Betsey, albeit not so lovely as in former days, always affected him strangely.

He was a tall, large, burly, bronzed, and genuinely honest yeoman, a fine specimen of the English farmer. He had a rough exterior, a rough manner, a rough hand when he slapped his nephew Charles on the back, and anything but a rough heart. He was possessed of property, both funded and landed. The Grange, where he resided, was his own; and he rented, besides, Mr. Michelson's largest farm. There was very little poverty in his immediate neighbourhood, for he kept all the poor, who chose to work, employed, and paid them regularly. His land was as rich and fertile as any in Somersetshire, that very rich and fertile county; and his fields sloped smoothly down to the river Parrott, and looked across at the famous little Isle of Athelney, where King Alfred let the immortal cakes burn. His abode was a large rambling farmhouse, and his style of living was profuse to extravagance. Bread and cheese and cider, milk, cream, butter, and bacon, must have almost learned to walk into the mouths of the various grades of visitors and beggars that assailed the door; and as to the huge hall table, it was never unspread. 'Cut and come again' was the motto Mr. Barnard had had inscribed on the large wooden platter which usually held the brown bread, and truly his guests did not refuse the invitation. All his eatables and drinkables were produced from his own land, and he never grudged them,—scarcely, indeed, knew how much was consumed in his house. All he knew was, that as soon as one batch of bread, fine rich cheese, or gammon of bacon was gone, there were plenty more to be had, and he never stopped to inquire who had eaten the one, or was likely to devour the other. Every Christmas a big hamper of good cheer was despatched to his brother Timothy in London, accompanied by a letter inviting him to the Grange, which was duly

acknowledged by the celebrated surgeon, and the letter as duly replied to. Brother Timothy always promised to visit his native place as soon as his numerous professional engagements would permit him, but never since he had set himself up as a surgeon in London had he fulfilled his promise. Mr. Barnard had a kind of feeling that his brother had become too grand for him, but he possessed too much honest pride to allow such a feeling to be displayed openly. It had, however, prevented his taking either Anna or his favourite Peter to London.

'Charley! Charley!' shouted Mr. Barnard one day, two or three months after his nephew had taken up his abode with him. He stood in the middle of a large meadow, and his voice was that of a Stentor. 'Charley! halloo there! Charley, I say! Where the deuce is the lad? My pony, too! I'll see how I'll let him ride again!'

Mr. Barnard strode through the meadow, hallooing at intervals, crossed a gate, and got into a ploughed field; walked over the furrows as if they were turnpike roads, and reached a smaller field by the river, fringed with alders and willows. He paused to call 'Charley!' once more, and was answered by a faint 'Coming, uncle, coming!'

Down by the river's brink was Charley, astride the pony, with a large book in his hand, that his uncle perceived was the 'Farmer's Calendar,' and gloried therein. He went on, however, and saw that his favourite pony was almost knee-deep in mud and water, and that he was quietly cropping the rich grass by the river. Charley's feet just touched the water, and he did not appear to have the least intention of moving away. Before him the cattle were standing in the calm river, and by his side the willows were arching and forming themselves into all sorts of picturesque shapes, reflected in the water. The setting sun was casting his farewell rays of gold over the scene, and some large water-lilies were expanding their white leaves beneath his beams. The birds were twittering sleepy good-nights to each other, and the cows looked too lazy to move away from the shallow part of the stream into which they had walked. One old bull, in particular, had fairly fallen asleep, and was literally 'standing for his picture.'

'What the dickens are you about, sir?' shouted Mr. Barnard, drawing near.

'Only a minute, uncle,—directly, uncle. Do not disturb the bull!'

Mr. Barnard now stood by his nephew's side, and saw, to his great disgust, the fly-leaf of the handsome book he had given him covered with pencil-marks. He was about to protest

against such sacrilege, when he caught sight of the sketch Charles was making. There was his famous bull, as like as mere pencilling could make him. The large head and sleepy face were sketched to perfection, and the rest of him, though carelessly done, was unmistakeably 'he himself he.' A rough outline of some of the other cattle, the willows, sloping field, water-lilies, and a few large stones, completed a hasty but clever sketch, which even Mr. Barnard, little as he knew of art, was struck with.

'And that's how you study the "Farmer's Calendar," is it, sir?' began Mr. Barnard, as soon as the last stroke was put into the bull's head. 'Dang my buttons, if ever I give you another farming book! Jerry up to his knees in water, besides, taking cold! your feet as wet as they can be! my supper waiting! I frightened out of my life, and all the people in full hue and cry after you! 'Twas only the other day that I found you making a pictur in the middle of the hay-field, and half the haymakers looking over your shoulder! The very handles of the ploughs have got cows and dogs upon 'em, and you pretending to learn farming! I can't put down a bit of a bill, or a letter, or a book, but when I take it up again I must needs see it ornamented either with my own big face, or Polly's, or one of the hounds! If that's the way you mean to go on, a fig for your farming, say I!'

'Indeed, uncle, I could not resist'—began Charles.

'It's all fudge, sir. Just go and drive them cattle out of the water into Little Mallow Mead, and then come home to supper.'

Charles obeyed, and his uncle strode homewards, fussing and fuming to himself. Charles overtook him, and said,—

'Indeed, uncle, I will give up sketching altogether; that will be the only way. I will make a temperance vow.'

'The deuce a bit!' said his uncle. 'Besides, I want a pictur of that bull in colours, to hang up in the parlour; and if you'll do me a big one the same as the little sketch you took this evening, I'll give you a holiday.'

'My dear uncle!' said Charles, brightening up, 'that I will. He will make a splendid picture.'

'I know I ought not to let you do it,' said Mr. Barnard thoughtfully, scratching his head. 'You'll be neither one thing nor t'other. Haw! haw! haw! A farmer sitting down in the middle of his harvest to make a drawing of his waggon and horses, or stopping in his ride round his farm to sketch a flock of sheep, or walking into the river to catch, as you painters call it, the sun upon the water! Haw! haw! haw! Oh, Charley,

my boy, that won't do! You must catch something a deal more lively than that.'

'Well, uncle, as soon as I have finished the bull, I will give it up, and take to studying farming, and nothing else.'

'There's a hearty!' said Mr. Barnard, inflicting such a slap on his nephew's back, as he dismounted from his pony at the door of the house, as almost prostrated him. 'A nice fellow, you, to shove a waggon up-hill! Haw! haw! haw!'

Charles worked day and night until he had completed a large coloured sketch of the river scene, in which the bull was the prominent feature. It was wonderfully clever for an almost self-taught youth; but then it was coloured from nature, and an artist, gifted with genius such as Charles possessed, is sure to do pretty well if he trust wholly to her guidance. He stood in the water and out of the water, wherever the bull and cows chanced to be when he wanted them, until he had finished his picture, and, being quite absorbed in his art, forgot the sun, the rain, the dews, and wet feet. The consequence was that he completed a painting that did not disgrace the splendid gilt frame ordered for it, and caught such a cold that it brought on a fever.

Poor fellow! he is now lying on a bed of suffering, and his uncle is watching impatiently by his bedside. The gig has just been despatched for Jessie, and a man and horse for the doctor. Whilst he slumbers uneasily, Mr. Barnard reproaches himself as the cause of the cold and fever. He gets up and walks about the room; his heavy footstep awakes Charles. He sits down again in a great passion with himself.

'Is Jessie come?' muttered Charles.

'Not quite,' replied his uncle in a whisper; 'she'll be here directly. There, lie still now. Is the pain so very bad? Zounds! why don't that fool of a doctor come! 'Tis always the case; they are never to be found when you send for 'em, though in any sudden accident there's sure to be three or four at hand. I wish Timothy was here.'

Wheels were heard, and Mr. Barnard hurried down-stairs.

'What is the matter?' asked Jessie, meeting him in the passage.

'Charley is terribly ill; go up to him straight,' said her uncle. 'Who the dickens have we here? Pynsent! where on earth did you come from?'

The latter part of the sentence was addressed to a young man who followed Jessie, and who was Mr. Pynsent Burton, surgeon.

'I came down last night, uncle,' said Pynsent, returning his uncle's hearty shake of the hand. 'I can attend to Charley.'

'Odds bobs! and who's to trust to such a young chap as you? 'Twas only the other day I nursed you, and you talking of doctoring your brother! But go your ways, and see what's to be done for Charley. If all ain't right, I shall send for Dr. Martin, mind you.' Pynsent left the room. 'I bain't a-going to have a boy's life sacrificed for the pleasure of seeing what such a sprig as that can do,—only just out of the egg, half-fledged, and yet quite cock-a-hoop. Oh, the vanity of this young generation! I know what I'll do; and then I shan't offend the lad, for I saw some of his poor mother's early spirit in him, when I called him a young chap. I know what I'll do: I'll write to Timothy as things go on, and get his advice.'

With this resolution Mr. Barnard opened a bureau that stood in the large hall, took up a sheet of foolscap paper and spread it upon the desk, sat down, and began, 'Dear Brother.' He considered a long time, finally closed the bureau, and went up-stairs to see what Pynsent was about. Then he came down again and wrote precisely what he thought of Charley and Pynsent on the sheet of foolscap. He went up-stairs again, and found Pynsent in another room, preparing a draught. By dint of questioning, he found out its principal ingredients, hurried to the bureau, and wrote them down. He continued to pursue this course until the last moment before it was necessary to send the letter to the post, when he signed, sealed, directed, and despatched the foolscap, and prepared another sheet.

In a few days poor Charley's fever assumed a decidedly typhoid form. All the remedies employed by Pynsent could not keep it down. Day and night he and Jessie watched and tended this dear brother, only to see him grow daily, nay, hourly, worse and worse. Mr. Barnard was so distressed that he did nothing but fret and fume. His only comfort seemed in his bureau, and when Jessie and Pynsent had time to wonder at anything, they wondered to see him constantly writing, and to learn that a letter arrived almost daily, hitherto a rare event in his life. His brother replied to his first letter by return of post: he said that nothing could be better than the measures resorted to by his nephew. As Charley got worse, Mr. Martin came to see him, and to consult with Pynsent, but there was nothing more to be done than Pynsent had done.

About the twelfth day Charley's life was despaired of: typhus in its worst form had come on, and was accompanied by constant delirium. Jessie and Pynsent were well-nigh spent; and as to Mr. Barnard, although of little use in the sick-room, he could scarcely be prevailed upon to absent himself from it.

As Jessie sat alone one night by Charley's bed, she gave way

to an unusual burst of grief. She suddenly thought of her mother's parting words, 'Take care of little Charley.' And that beloved object of the mother's last earthly care, that youngest born, was about, perhaps, to join her in another world, and to leave Jessie for ever! The only one from whom she had never been separated, even for a day,—the patient, gentle brother. Jessie fell on her knees, and poured out her sorrow at the footstool of her God. Grief and prayer were no new things to her. Young as she still was, she had seen both her parents die, and had received from them their last commands and last blessings. Was she now to hear the final sigh of that beloved brother? She suppressed the rising sob as she prayed for him, 'Give him back to us, O my God, for his Saviour's sake! Yet not my will, but Thine be done.' These words recalled her natural composure. Whatever the Almighty willed was right. If it was His pleasure to take her brother from this beautiful world to one more lovely, where pain and grief were not, and all was peace and happiness, it would be, doubtless, for the best: he would be removed before much of evil or human suffering had ruffled the serenity of his nature; and, after a brief space of existence, she might, with God's grace, follow him, and dwell with him for ever. But oh that he might know her before he passed away! Oh that those delirious wanderings, fanciful and touching as they were, might cease, and that he might be recalled to think of his Saviour before the last dread hour!

Out of the darkness and silence arose his voice, even whilst she prayed. His mind strayed amongst green fields, woods, waters, hills, and ruins. The scenes and events of an innocent childhood were present to him, and he gathered sweet violets for his mother and Jessie, or strung the rich cowslips into balls for play. Again he was sketching beautiful landscapes, or innumerable successions of herds of cattle, that would not stand still for him; or striving after some grand ideal conception, of which he had formed but a slight fancy in health, but which now rose before him with all the grandeur of reality. Again he repeated long pieces of poetry, which must have faded from his memory in its natural state, and hymns that Jessie had taught him years ago. But, best of all, he went through our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, which he had learned on Sunday evenings for Jessie; and then seemed to have the family Bible before him, and to be murmuring of the old pictures and gazing upon them. It was a consolation to Jessie's fond heart to feel that none but peaceful, happy memories thronged through his bewildered mind, and that he did not appear conscious of the burning fever that was consuming him.

On the fifteenth day they all stood around the bed,—Jessie, Pynsent, and Mr. Barnard, with the addition of Captain Burford and Mr. Martin. They were all breathlessly awaiting his death. His face was almost black; the throat refused to swallow the teaspoonful of wine that had kept life hitherto in the body; the pulse was so rapid that it could no longer be counted; the delirium had ceased, and a stupor had taken its place; all that could be done had been done—in vain. Both doctors said he must die; nothing earthly could save him; the crisis was past, he was sinking rapidly.

Jessie laid a cloth soaked in vinegar and water over his temples, wetted his parched, blackened lips with wine and water; he opened his eyes,—he looked at her, he knew her,—she was convinced he knew her. 'With God all things are possible,' she thought.

All that long, weary night, and the greater part of the following day, he lingered on the verge of the grave. How exhausted nature sustained herself, it was impossible to say; but the torch of life still flickered faintly—oh, how faintly! A small portion of liquid seemed to enter the throat; it nearly choked him, but it passed down. They tried more: almost drop by drop it followed. Oh, the anxious agony of that next hour!

And then he slept. 'Oh, merciful Father in heaven, look down and bless his slumbers!' prayed his fainting, hoping sister. He slept,—yes, it was sleep, and not stupor,—breathing, and not panting. Jessie, who had been watching for the death-hour, was too excited to watch that sleep. She went out into the night. The moon and one star were looking calmly down upon the rambling farmhouse, unconscious of the scene of anxious misery within. That star! it was her mother, she was sure,—her mother watching over her child: he would not die. She wandered into the fields. How calmly the gentle sheep slept beneath the skies! no trouble for life, no anguished presentiment of death. That star, how brightly it shone! Jessie knelt down beneath it, upon the dewy grass: in the heart of sleeping nature, animate and inanimate, she knelt and prayed—to the star, to her mother in heaven, to her fathers in heaven, to him who was once with her, and to Him who was always with her. She supplicated for her brother's life. She had lost her resignation: if he died, she must die also.

She pressed her hands upon her forehead; it was so hot it frightened her. She hurried back to the house—to the room; all was hushed as the grave. Pynsent watched alone. He put his finger to his lips, and moved towards her. 'The pulse has lessened—there is hope,' he murmured. She went into the next

room; Captain Burford and Mr. Martin were there. She looked wild, and spoke wildly; she flung herself into her guardian's arms.

'Martin, come here, for God's sake!' exclaimed Captain Burford. 'Feel her, how burning she is!'

'She has taken the infection,' said Mr. Martin.

God help them, those two poor men, the guardian and the uncle! It was pitiful to see them weep. Yes, Jessie had caught the fever. It had been for days raging in her veins, and now it was at its height. The servants, who loved her to distraction, got her into bed. They would not tell Pynsent that night, so Mr. Martin prescribed.

Mr. Barnard sat down to the bureau. He wrote at the end of the foolscap sheet as follows:—'Half-past one A.M. Jessie has the fever,—the stay of the family, the hope and comfort of us all; if she dies, they are ruined. For the love you have as a brother, come to us. I have asked you often, when I could give you pleasure,—you have never come; will you come now that we are miserable? I feel sure that you would save her. Oh, come at once, for God's sake!'

With a trembling hand the large, burly man sealed that letter; he had scarcely power to do it. It was four days before an answer could arrive, and she might be dead before then.

At the close of the third day a post-chaise drove up to the door. The posters were nearly exhausted. Mr. Barnard rushed from his bureau to the door. He would not have known that rather elderly gentleman under any other circumstances, but now his heart told him it was his brother. He opened his large arms, and folded him in an embrace that, at any other time, would have disconcerted him.

'Brother, this is kind,' he said. 'Welcome home!'

'How do you do, James? God bless you!' said Mr. Timothy, as soon as he was freed from the embrace.

Mr. Barnard led the way up-stairs. He called Pynsent out of Jessie's room.

'Pynsent, this is my brother Timothy, come to see Jessie and Charley,' he said.

Pynsent started, and the colour rushed to his face,—the uncle he had so longed yet half-feared to know, whose reputation as a surgeon was so high.

Uncle Timothy shook hands with him, and with professional tact and feeling said,—

'I am come to help you, not to supplant you; your treatment of your patients has been admirable.'

They went to Charley's room. He was asleep; his face was

deadly pale, but had lost some of the fearful black hue that had overspread it. Uncle Timothy felt his pulse.

'All right here,' he said; 'nothing but nourishment wanted; what do you think?'

'We have been pouring wine and porter down his throat, and everything that he can swallow that has strength in it,' said Pynsent.

'Good!' said his uncle.

They proceeded to Jessie. The first words that greeted them were,—

'I have tried to do my duty by them, mamma. I could not help Charley's dying,—it was God's will! I see you, mamma; I am coming to you.' And then a sweet but excited voice began to sing a hymn.

Uncle Timothy shook his head. He sat down by the bedside and looked awhile at Jessie. She tried to sit up in bed, but fell back again. A tear started to his eye. He put his hand upon her pulse, and she looked at him. He had been always reckoned very like his sister, and some slight perception evidently crossed her disordered brain. She seized his hand and held it fast; then, smiling, again talked to her mother, as if she was quite near her.

The fever in her cheeks and eyes had given a surpassing brilliancy to her appearance, for she had not reached the worst stage of the disease. Uncle Timothy smoothed her pillow, kissed her cheek, and, having beckoned to a servant to take his place, left her.

Then he and Pynsent consulted together, or rather he consulted with Pynsent on what he had done and meant to pursue.

'Very good,' said Mr. Barnard approvingly; 'and now let me feel your pulse.'

Pynsent smiled, and gave his hand.

'You are not well,' said his uncle gravely; 'and these are things not to be trifled with. I shall insist on your going instantly to bed. By timely remedies you may be spared this fever; without them, you will surely have it.'

Pynsent felt his own pulse, and knew that his uncle spoke the truth. Mr. Martin arrived, and confirmed it. They told Mr. Barnard that Pynsent was knocked up by long watching, and that he must have a quiet night somewhere. Mr. Barnard had caused his own room to be put ready for his brother Timothy, and intended sleeping himself on the sofa in the parlour. Uncle Timothy said that he could sleep anywhere, so Pynsent was ordered to this room, despite his protestations to the contrary.

CHAPTER VII.

'Between two worlds life hovers like a star,
'Twixt night and morn, upon the horizon's verge.
How little do we know that which we are!
How less what we may be! The eternal surge
Of time and tide rolls on, and bears afar
Our bubbles: as the old burst new emerge,
Lash'd from the foam of ages; while the graves
Of empires heave but like some passing waves.'

BYRON.

THE sickness at the Grange awoke a feeling of commiseration and sympathy throughout the whole neighbourhood. Even persons who knew little or nothing of the young people who were thus stricken, were constant in their inquiries. It is unnecessary to state that Captain Burford paid daily visits, and that the illness of Jessie was a source of the deepest anxiety and distress to him. It was almost impossible to keep him from her room, or to prevail on him to return home at night. His grief was heightened by a letter he had received from his son, stating that his health had suffered so much from the climate of India, and from the hard service on which he had been engaged, that, unless he grew much and speedily better, he should return home in a few months on sick leave. The letter also contained the intelligence of his having obtained his lieutenancy, and having been promoted to the interpretership of his regiment. He had always been chary of speaking or writing much about himself, but the Indian journals had from time to time reported favourably of him, and his father knew enough of the Oriental languages to be convinced that he must have studied very hard before he could have been linguist enough to be made interpreter.

Amongst the most anxious and kind of the various inquirers was Mr. Michelson. It so chanced that there was a general election, and Mr. Michelson had determined upon standing for the county. Any kind of excitement was life to him, and he began to tire of the finest pictures and statues, nay, even of the handsomest women, and to pine for novelty. An election was the very thing to suit him, and he returned from abroad to see what was to be done. He was conscious of having lived so seldom amongst his neighbours and tenantry as to be little known or cared for by them. With some of the tact belonging to himself peculiarly, and much of that common to all electioneerers, he set about achieving popularity. It matters not much to us how he got on generally, but as regards our own

particular friends and acquaintances it does matter somewhat. Oh, the grapes, peaches, nectarines, bottles of old wine, best Guinness's porter, and baskets of flowers that appeared at the Grange, brought from Michelson Hall, was a sight to be seen! How many of these presents were due to his former admiration of Miss Burton, and how many to the election, is not for me to determine. Farmer Barnard was a Tory of the old school; Captain Burford a Whig of the old school; Pynsent rather inclined to Whiggism of a newer school, in spite of the red-hot Toryism of all his family, Aunt Betsey inclusive. Mr. Michelson did not care much what he was, provided he was returned as one of the members for Somerset. He called himself a Conservative, a name then beginning to be fashionable, as the best means of uniting Whig and Tory interest. Now, a great many grapes and bottles of old wine and delicate attentions were necessary to amalgamate all those family political differences of opinion into votes for a Conservative member, especially when, on account of the fever, he could not canvass in person.

He had plenty of time before him, however, as the election was not to take place for some months, and he had a most efficient aid in his very handsome, dashing son, a young cavalry officer of charming manners.

His presents were received at the Grange with every feeling and expression of gratitude; and most welcome and beneficial they were, to Charley especially, who was out of danger, but still prostrated from extreme weakness. Charley might, perhaps, have gained more strength had his mind been at rest, but he had managed to find out, in spite of all kinds of subterfuges, that Jessie had the fever, and he was possessed with the notion that she would die, and that he would not be able to see her. But it pleased God that Jessie should not die, neither was she reduced to the same extreme weakness that had resulted from the fever in Charley's case. When the crisis was past, and the delirium had left her, she was able to question those about her concerning her brothers. The first person she appealed to was her unknown uncle. She thought she should be able to bear to hear the worst better from a stranger than from one of her own friends.

'Your brother Charles is better, my dear,' said her uncle, 'and there is every prospect of his recovery.'

Jessie clasped her thin white hands, and raised her eyes to heaven. Her uncle inwardly joined her in her mute thanksgiving. He saw that she had not strength to question him further, so he said, after a time,—

'Pynsent is not in danger; his illness proceeded as much

from anxiety as fever. He has not lost his senses at all, and though taken down the last, will probably be well first. Now, my dear, drink this, and sleep.'

She swallowed a composing draught, and turned away. Large, full tears rolled from her eyes, until, like an infant, she silently wept herself to sleep.

'Poor child! poor child!' said Uncle Timothy, 'you have too much upon your young mind, I am sure.'

Strange that he should have been the first person to discover this fact. Everybody else believed Jessie equal to anything; and she had been so used to do more than she was equal to, that nobody thought it at all remarkable that from the age of fifteen to three or four and twenty she should have been at work, head, heart, and limbs, from morning to night.

When Jessie awoke from her long and refreshing sleep, she found the strange doctor again by her bedside. She thought it odd that he should be sitting so quietly at the little round table, reading by the dim rushlight, and that everybody else should have left her. She moved as well as her weakness would let her, that she might look at him. What a quiet, serene face he had, and how earnestly he was reading! She gradually recalled some of the wandering fancies she had been possessed with in the fever, and dimly remembered that she had imagined herself tended by her mother; that mother's face was before her, and in some way it connected itself with that of her silent companion. Possibilities and impossibilities presented themselves to her mind. She made a movement to attract the attention of the reader; he was feeling her pulse in a moment.

'Better,' he said, with a smile, and sat down on the bed.

'Are you my Uncle Timothy?' asked Jessie, looking at him very earnestly.

'Yes, my dear,' said he, quite thrown off his guard by so unexpected a question.

'I thought so,' said Jessie, 'you are so like mamma!' and she burst into tears.

'My dear, my dear,' said Uncle Timothy, 'you must not give way. What an old fool I am!'

He bent over her and kissed her cheek. She put her arms gently round his neck, as if he had indeed been her mother, and was much excited. Uncle Timothy again sat down by the little table.

'Do you love this Book, my dear? It is the Holy Bible. I think you do, from much I have heard you say when you did not know what you were saying.'

Jessie smiled, and murmured 'Yes.'

'Then I will read to you.'

Uncle Timothy had been reading the Psalms. He was very fond of that portion of sacred writ; and to many a poor sufferer before Jessie had he begun with the verse, 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me.' He read well, and with feeling. Jessie's tears flowed more quietly, and at last they ceased. She clasped her hands and prayed with the Psalmist.

Whilst they were thus engaged, Mr. Barnard entered; he paused a moment, and then sat down by his brother. He was not a pious man, though a worthy and kind-hearted one, and had been accustomed to laugh at his sister as a saint; but the visitation in his household had made him ask, 'Does affliction come from the ground?' and had checked several improper expressions and bursts of passion to which he was accustomed thoughtlessly to give way. He now listened, almost for the first time in his life, to the Bible as if he were himself a party concerned, and the words of the king of Israel entered into his heart, as they have, by God's grace, entered into the hearts of thousands, for good.

When Uncle Timothy saw that Jessie was calm, and thought he had read enough, he took a little black book out of his pocket, and asked her whether they should unite in thanking God for His late mercies vouchsafed unto them. She assented, and he knelt down. Mr. Barnard did the same. For the first time since their infancy the brothers knelt together, and together offered up the same words of thanksgiving. Short and simple was the prayer read by Mr. Timothy Barnard, thanking God for the recovery of the grievously sick and afflicted, and emphatically did he pronounce the words. When he concluded with our Lord's Prayer, Jessie's weak voice joined, and Mr. Barnard's powerful bass also fell in. If prayer and thanksgiving be heard in heaven, assuredly those words have entered there, and 'the fellowship of the Holy Spirit' is with the three earthly worshippers, to assist, encourage, and strengthen for 'the race set before them.'

Long before the three invalids were recovered, their good and kind Uncle Timothy was obliged to leave them. He had the satisfaction of seeing them together, however, before he did so. He directed the preparations in the largest and most airy of the bedrooms for their reception, and assisted in transporting them thither.

Who shall describe the meeting of the brothers and sister? The tears, the smiles, the inward thanksgivings,—they who had not expected to meet again in this world!

It was when all gradually became composed, that Uncle Timothy was first introduced to Charley, and that he also named the period of his return to London. Everybody exclaimed against this proceeding, but Uncle Timothy was firm. Hearing the lamentations of the whole party, and knowing them to be sincere, he said that, 'God willing' (he always inserted the D.V. when any distant plan was proposed) 'he would eat his Christmas dinner with them.' This proposal caused his brother to rise and cross the room to shake him by the hand, and to declare 'that one volunteer was worth a hundred press men,' and that he was right glad he had not asked him this year. He added a clause, however, to his self-invitation.

'I shall bring down Anna,' he said, 'and, I believe, Miss Colville, who, Anna tells me, has at last obtained permission from her parents to spend her holidays at Fairfield, previously to her sailing for India. But I must propose another guest.'

'Tiny!' exclaimed Jessie and Charles in a breath. 'Oh, how nice! how I do long to see her! We know her quite well, Uncle Timothy, from Anna's description, who dotes upon her.'

'Will you ask her to bring some of her drawings, and some of her father's, if she can?' said Charles modestly.

'That you may take her out sketching, and give her a fever?' said Uncle Timothy slyly. 'She may bring them, provided you do not ask her to draw. The poor child is out of health, and wants a change, and Mrs. Eveleigh wishes to go and see some relation or other who does not care to have Tiny; and I am sure my niece Jessie will be kind to the poor fatherless child.'

'That she will!' said Captain Burford; 'she is kind to every one.'

Here it may be well to say that Mr. Timothy Barnard's little *protegée* Sophia, or Tiny, as she had been called by Anna, on account of her slight, small form, had grown up to the age of nine years under Mrs. Eveleigh's care. Mr. Barnard had thought of canvassing for her election into one of the various schools or charitable institutions for female orphans, but the idea of making her unfortunate case public revolted against him, and he had allowed her to continue with Mrs. Eveleigh. Mrs. Eveleigh was a sufficiently sensible woman to teach her all that she required in her childhood, and, although not a person of high education, had a tolerably well-informed mind. Tiny could read and write, and make certain attempts at ciphering, but her greatest pleasure seemed to be in drawing. Surrounded by paintings from her infancy, she had acquired a love for them, and, as Mrs. Eveleigh had picked up some knowledge of it from her husband, she fostered Tiny's talent, and the child was in

the habit of drawing, like Charley, for her amusement. When Mr. Barnard saw this, he procured a master for her, and she had now been learning nearly two years, and had made considerable progress.

Anna, too, was getting on in age and accomplishments. Somehow or other she had made a complete conquest of her uncle. For instance, in one of her petulant moments she had given him to understand that she dreaded the time when she was to leave her novitiate, and become an actual teacher in Miss Primmerton's establishment. This was mere pride; but Uncle Timothy did not look upon it in that light, but fancied she was too young to see things as she ought, and therefore let her go on year after year a mere learner, and at an enormous expense. Anna was a great favourite of Miss Primmerton's, who was fond of her for her own sake and her uncle's. Miss Primmerton had taken advantage of Mr. Barnard's kind permission, and had consulted him more than once. She, like many of her over-worked sisterhood, suffered from violent nervous affection of the head, and it was this that helped to make her temper irritable; for it is hard to teach—remember this, ye fractious and impatient and obstinate young people!—when the head is throbbing, and every nerve in it driving the teacher mad. Uncle Timothy had been of more service to Miss Primmerton, and had had more patience with her, than any other medical man whom she had before consulted: therefore she had in her turn more patience with his niece. I do not say this was right, but 'one good turn deserves another,' and Miss Primmerton did not often meet with real consideration from the friends of her pupils. She was generally a governess and nothing more.

She strongly advised Mr. Timothy Barnard to let Anna be a teacher in her school for one year, at least, before she went into a family as governess. Jessie had given the same advice to Anna during the midsummer vacation; so, with much distaste, the half-year during which her brothers and sisters were suffering from one kind of fever, she was enduring another much worse in its way. She continued to receive lessons from the various masters, and to give them in turns to the younger pupils,—or rather, she prepared them for the masters. She hated this, not so much because she disliked helping the children, as because she was now a teacher. One or two of her former schoolfellows, over whom she had acquired a certain power in her capacity of elder pupil, now looked down upon her in that of teacher to the younger ones; and her pride was so constantly fighting against her propriety, that she had but little peace of mind.

Louisa Colville used to laugh, and tell her that she wished she was a teacher, if it was only to show up the impertinence of such girls; but Anna's pride of heart was too deep for that, she could only treat her former admirers with scorn, and let them feel, whenever she could, how much more beautiful, accomplished, and admired she was than they were.

When Uncle Timothy returned from the Grange, and went to see Anna, she heard for the first time of the dangerous illness of those she loved. She had wondered, over and over again, that no letters had arrived from home, but had attributed the silence to every cause but the right one. Now, how her warm heart was pained when she thought of what her brothers and her dear sister had suffered! Her first impulse was to entreat to be allowed to go home at once, but Uncle Timothy over-ruled this by assuring her that they were all doing well, and pointing out how near Christmas was,—it was then October. The prospect of the journey home with her uncle, Louisa Colville, and her dear Tiny, comforted her, and she resolved not to mind the disagreeables of her life as teacher, but to put a brave face upon it, and to do her best. This she really did for three whole days, but on the fourth she flagged, thanks to the very simple question, put by one of her former friends, of, 'Are you likely to go as a governess to the Pynsents or the Burtons, Miss Burton?'

Thus was her own little pride of family turned against herself, as indeed all pride generally is, in one way or other. But unfortunately her pride of beauty was continually fostered. In her daily walks, at her uncle's, at the very church door, from the masters, from Mrs. Hicks, from everybody, she constantly heard the words, 'What a lovely girl!' Can we wonder that vanity swelled within her young, untutored heart?

CHAPTER VIII.

'How pleasant, when night falls down
And hides the wintry sun,
To see them come in to the blazing fire,
And know that their work is done;
Whilst many bring in, with a laugh and rhyme,
Green branches of holly for Christmas time!
Oh, the holly, the bright green holly!
It tells like a tongue, that the times are jolly.'

PROCTOR.

WHO shall describe the feelings of expectation and excitement of the family at Fairfield as Christmas approached? Who shall convey an idea of Jessie's preparations for her various guests,—of Aunt Betsey's devotion to her toilet,—of Pynsent's

anxiety about the state of the cellar and the general finances,—of Charley's nervous sensations at the prospect of two strange young ladies,—of Farmer Barnard's palpitations at the certainty of frequent meetings with Miss Burton, the adored of his youth,—and, above all, of Dinah's trepidations at the influx of so much company? It was a wonder to see Jessie, just recovered from her fever, contriving sleeping apartments, arranging furniture, making mince-meat, cutting up sugar, compounding rich plum-puddings, salting beef, examining hams and tongues, to be hung up and kept till Christmas came round again; making cakes, and helping to bake them; airing bed-linen, seeing to ashen faggots, looking at pickles, preserves, and elder wine; gathering evergreens, sending into the wood for mistletoe, making up messes for poor people's children,—for it was a severe winter, and there was no end of coughs and colds,—stitching at all kinds of flannel petticoats, for Christmas presents for the labourers' wives and children; almost crying as she ordered certain fat geese and turkeys that she had reared, to be slaughtered; talking of pigeon pie, but not having the heart to doom the birds that came to perch on her shoulder and eat out of her hand; scolding Pynsent for doing nothing to help her; aiding Aunt Betsey in the manufacture of a certain pomatum and wash for the hands, and sitting with Charley whenever she could find time.

And why should she sit with Charley? you ask. Because Charley is still suffering from the effects of the fever. As is often the case in typhus, it has left a sad legacy behind it. Nobody knows exactly where the evil has fixed itself, but for the present, at least, Charley is almost helpless. He has a weakness somewhere, which has entirely deprived him of the use of his limbs. Whether it is in the spine or in the joints, the doctors cannot determine, as he suffers no pain. But it prevents his walking and sitting upright; so he is obliged to lie down all day long, on an inclined plane, and to take strengthening medicine, prepared and administered by Pynsent, who is anxiously expecting his uncle's arrival, to consult with him on this unfortunate case. Pynsent himself is not very strong yet, though he is pursuing his medical studies *con amore*. He pokes his nose into the cottage of every poor person who is sick, and has already gained some fame amongst them. He reads dry books and long cases all day long, and writes down the symptoms of the patients he voluntarily attends, every day, with a view to the future achievement of his fortunes, and the benefit of the human race. He intends to wait till Christmas is over, before he regularly establishes himself in his profession, and has almost

made up his mind, entirely on Jessie's account, to settle in his native place. He would give all he possesses in the world to have a fair start in London, and then to work his way to fame and fortune; but he feels that Jessie ought not to be left at Fairfield to combat with life alone, and so, like a true-hearted brother, he will stay near her and help her.

Christmas Day is on a Thursday this year. On the Wednesday of the important and happy week, Charley lies on his back in the 'parlour,' not like the famous king, 'counting out his money,' but with a round table by his side, absolutely stoning raisins; whilst Jessie stands in the 'kitchen,' not like that king's equally celebrated queen, 'eating bread and honey,' but with her arms immersed in a brown pan full of flour, 'making,' not eating, like little Jack Horner, 'a Christmas pie.' Jessie is so intent on her work, and is singing so merrily over it, that she does not hear the stealthy footsteps behind her, nor see the two men that creep through the hall into the kitchen. If two of her senses are thus sealed up, the third, that of feeling, is speedily opened; for she suddenly becomes conscious of being caught in the arms of somebody or other, and having a hearty kiss imprinted on her lips.

'Don't, Pynsent!' she exclaims; when she perceives that it is not Pynsent, but a tall, upright, sunburnt young man, bearing a certain resemblance to the Nelson Burford that went to India eight or nine years ago. She gives a little scream of joy, blushes very much, and, without thinking of the flour, stretches out her hand, which, equally thoughtlessly, her childhood-affianced husband takes, and presses between both his own.

'Ha! ha! ha!' shouts Captain Burford, 'not a warm welcome, but a floury one! Isn't he grown, Jessie? He took me by surprise last night just in the same way, only I hadn't my arms bare and all over flour. I'll be bound, Nelson, you never saw that sort of thing in India.'

Jessie had recovered herself, and stood, blushing still, and smiling through certain tears that had appeared, and trembling somewhat, looking down into her pan of flour. Nelson glanced at her, and thought her prettier and more delicate-looking at five-and-twenty than she was at seventeen. He had fully made up his mind to meet her with the utmost friendly discretion, a brotherly shake of the hand, and nothing more; but that sweet, pleasant voice that he had loved to hear when a child, and the dear old hall and familiar house and furniture, had got over him, and, in spite of himself, he had given that warm embrace to his playfellow and friend.

Be it known at once that Lieutenant Burford, of the Bengal

Light Cavalry, has not come home, like many Indian officers, in search of a wife, but in search of health, like most of them. Indeed, he has determined not to marry, and has already cautioned his father against his old whim of calling Jessie his wife, which accounts for the worthy Captain's silence on that subject at their first meeting, to him a very difficult matter. Moreover, Lieutenant Burford intends to treat the warm-hearted friend of his youth as a friend, and nothing more,—an intention which he is evidently carrying out by calling her Jessie every second minute, and following her about just as he used to do. Still I affirm that he is not what is vulgarly called 'in love' with her, though he loves her very much; but if Jessie is not 'in love' with him, she assuredly never will be with anybody. To prevent all kind of unnecessary guessing about the matter, I will confess at once that she is sincerely attached to him, and has been all her life—ever since she was born. Some women are capable of such an attachment,—such women as Jessie,—true, single-hearted creatures, who go about everything with a downright purpose, and cannot change.

Jessie was obliged just to finish that pie, and wash her hands, and make herself neat, so she begged her friends to go and see Charley, and sent to tell Aunt Betsey to go down quick into the parlour. But before she had half finished, Nelson was back again, to tell her that he had seen Peter,—the brother who had only written twice since he left home,—and had five hundred messages and twenty presents from him to all. That he was the greatest pickle in the ship, and the favourite of all his messmates, but under frequent condemnation of the captain. That he was every inch a sailor, and loved his profession next to his sisters; such was his expression. That he 'meant to come home some day with lots of prize-money, and kick up such a shindy as never was.' That he really would write oftener if he could, but that there was so much to do on shipboard, and so much to see on shore, that he never found time. He told Nelson to be sure to say that he never forgot any of them; in proof of which he produced a perfect bazaar of articles that he had collected at different ports, all ticketed, and which he desired Nelson to give Jessie, that she might distribute them as marked amongst his friends. The captain of his ship, the *Bonne Espérance*, told Nelson that he was the bravest, most careless, hardiest, and most untameable of all his midshipmen; but that he would be a capital sailor, and had already shown great courage and skill on more than one occasion. He was fond of him, but obliged to keep a tight hand on him for fear of insubordination. Nelson ventured to say that Peter might

be done anything with by kindness, and driven to do anything by severity.

On Wednesday Pynsent was at the inn with the car, to receive the expected guests. They had taken the inside of the coach, to the disappointment of many other passengers; and as Pynsent shook hands with his uncle, kissed his sister, bowed to Miss Colville, and lifted out Tiny, the bystanders all thought that the family at Fairfield must have had an influx of fortune, to account for such an influx of guests. A cart and horse was in waiting to receive the luggage, which they disposed of first; and when the travellers were seated inside the car, Pynsent took the driving-seat, and they were soon on their way to Fairfield, Anna chattering for the whole party, in high spirits.

Jessie, meanwhile, was in a great fuss. Aunt Betsey was seated in state in the parlour, dressed for company; and Charley had begged for a fire in his bedroom, to avoid the first meeting with the strange young ladies. It was a fine frosty day, and Fairfield looked bright and sunny. Jessie heard the wheels, and rushed out to the gate. Anna was soon in her arms.

'Here is Louisa Colville,' said Anna.

'Oh, I know you quite well!' said Louisa, as Jessie, rather shyly, put out her hand; 'I am so glad to come and see you,' and herewith she gave Jessie a hearty kiss; this was followed by another from Uncle Timothy. 'And here is Tiny,' said Anna, bringing forward the shy child, who had crept behind her.

Jessie saw nothing but long brown curls, for the little face was bent down. She made her way through the curls, and kissed the sweet pale face, then took the trembling little hand, and proceeded to the house.

Here again all was presentation and bustle. Aunt Betsey curtseyed with much grace. Uncle Timothy just touched the tips of her fingers; and there was no outpouring of affection anywhere. 'Quite right,' some genteel moralist may say; 'we have had enough of kissing for one chapter.'

Boxes are carried up-stairs, whilst the travellers warm themselves round the hall fire, whither they have gone from the parlour, at Pynsent's suggestion, who never was 'fine' in his life, and would not see his aunt's nods and winks. He thinks Louisa Colville a very pretty girl, but he does not think or care much about anything but physic. The London ladies are much pleased and surprised at the large hall and chimney-corner, and at the evergreens with which it is fairly covered, to say nothing of the fire on the hearth. Anna runs straight to see Charley, and Jessie directs the placing of the luggage.

'Oh, Anna, this is charming! perfect Elysium!' said Louisa

Colville to Anna as she entered their room. 'It is all what one reads about in books. India, London, and the country are three different worlds. And your sister is much prettier than I fancied she would be, and your brother much stiffer. Why did he not shake hands with me, I wonder? That formal London bow was too smart for the country; and what a grand lady your aunt is! She is so like you, Anna. Oh! it is so charming, and I am so happy already. Hurrah for Fairfield, and good-bye to Miss Primmerton and her spectacles! I never thought I should have got out of poor Pussy's claws.'

'I wish I were out of them,' said Anna; 'I'll never go back again as teacher, come what may.'

'Oh, what is that on the window-sill?' asked Miss Colville, looking frightened.

'Only one of Jessie's pigeons, little Mousey,' replied Anna. 'Don't be afraid, we will let him in;' and she opened the window, and in flew a pair of beautiful white pigeons.

The two girls turned their bags inside out for the crumbs remaining from their travelling stores, and Miss Colville soon forgot Miss Primmerton and her unpacking in her new delight at such unaccustomed guests.

Whilst they were feeding the pigeons, Jessie and Tiny were differently occupied. When the child's wrappings were taken off, Jessie had time and opportunity to wonder at her appearance; she was so small and delicate-looking, that she scarcely seemed earthly. The curls that fell over her pale face, like sunbeams streaking a small white cloud, were the only living things about her; for her large, melancholy, violet eyes could not be said to have life or fire in them,—not, at least, when Jessie thus looked at them,—they seemed made for tears. She was dressed very simply and inexpensively, in a dark brown frock, and plain white trousers; and she was particular in having a clean pinafore on, before she finished her toilet. Jessie looked at her with pity, and thought how unnatural it was for a child to be so grave and pale. So calm and spiritual and passionless a face is seldom seen in childhood, and painful when seen: still she was beautiful, rarely beautiful, in her statue-like quietude. Her features were small but regular, and her complexion sparklingly fair. Nobody could tell why her young face so seldom wore the spring-tide smiles of childhood. She seemed happy with Mrs. Eveleigh, who loved her, and whom she considered her mother. But there was small congeniality between their two natures. Mrs. Eveleigh was a kind-hearted, talkative woman, with a great taste for fancy needlework and management; always busy, and anxious that the child should be

employed. Tiny was a secret-hearted, silent little girl, about whose quiet thoughts Mrs. Eveleigh knew no more than she did about the current that ran beneath the river by the little farm where she was born; though she loved the calm river, and often dreamed of it, in her small suburban home. Tiny had learned to do fancy needlework and plain needlework too; had helped to manufacture articles for sale, as well as her own garments; and she had always done her best, and been generally docile and obedient: but the only occupation she seemed to take to with all her heart was drawing. She had no companions, no friends of her own age. She was so shy whenever her guardian came to see her, that it was impossible to say whether she liked him or not; and when she paid him a visit, Mrs. Hicks always frightened her so terribly that she lost all her good manners. She was more at home with Anna; but she again was so merry, and had so many little odd, half-teasing, half-playful ways, that she seldom ventured to go much beyond a 'Yes' and 'No' even with her.

'Shall I brush your hair, dear?' asked Jessie, as Tiny took a neat little bag, containing a hair-brush, from her one box.

'No, thank you, ma'am, I always do it myself,' replied Tiny, and immediately set about arranging her pretty curls, without the help of a glass.

'Now, Tiny,' said Jessie, 'you must tell me of all you wish and want whilst you are here. I am not used to your ways yet, and I am anxious to know all that will please you most, that you may be very happy.'

And is that face so passionless and calm, after all? Look now! Large eyes with big tears in them, thin nostrils, and pale lips quivering with some sudden emotion, but no colour,—not the faintest symptoms of a blush. She looks up, for the first time, into Jessie's kind, truthful eyes,—she sees that she means what she says.

'Thank you,' she breathes rather than speaks. 'I should like to see Charley.'

'Charley is not very well,' Jessie said, looking surprised; 'but I will ask him to let me take you to him.'

'Not if he dislikes it,' said the child.

Jessie went away, and soon returned, bearing Charley's consent. She took the little girl by the hand, and was surprised to feel that she trembled. Charley was lying on a couch by the fire in his bedroom, with a large portfolio posted up against his knees before him, on which was a sketch that he had been attempting to finish. A small table by his side was covered with paints, pencils, and all kinds of drawing materials. Charley had

felt the same kind of interest in Tiny that she had felt in him. Each had heard of the other's one engrossing pursuit, and the pursuit was the same in both. This is introduction enough to many people. Yet Tiny's morsel of a hand shook very much when she put it into Charley's, and Jessie almost laughed at their extreme solemnity.

'Now you must come down to dinner, Tiny,' said Jessie, 'and by and by you shall see some of Charley's drawings.'

Tiny obeyed, once more putting her little hand into Charley's, but not venturing to look at him as she did so.

'Is he very ill?' she asked timidly of Jessie, as they went down the passage.

Jessie's reply was drowned by a shout of laughter from the 'best bedroom.' She knocked at the door. 'Come in,' was the reply. They entered, and found the two young ladies surrounded by a whole flock of pigeons. Anna had sent for grain to please Miss Colville, and Dinah, the bearer, was standing by, marvelling at the unwonted amusement of the strangers. Tiny at first peeped behind Jessie, but the sight of the pigeons overcame her timidity, and she was soon in the midst of them. Perhaps she thought that where such gentle shy creatures as those soft white birds could fly, she surely might find a place also. Two or three of them were soon perched on Jessie's head and shoulders, and feeding from her hands; but Jessie had a kindly feeling for the bedside carpets and Dinah's scrubbed floor, and waited a fitting opportunity to dismiss them.

'Jessie! Jessie!' whispered a voice near. It was Pynsent, looking cross. 'Are you not coming down to dinner?'

The door was wide open, and as he crept along the passage and called Jessie, he could not help looking in. He was amused at the scene, which was too irresistible to be let alone, in spite of the London misses. He clapped his hands, stamped his feet, and uttered a loud 'Whoo-oo!' as he went past the room, unseen by its inmates. Off flew the pigeons in a dreadful fright; up started Tiny from the floor, on which she was sitting, and Louisa from her kneeling posture, both looking scared. Anna shut the door, and Jessie exclaimed, 'It is only Pynsent; he is always getting up some joke or other.'

Louisa Colville looked in the glass. Her hair was decidedly untidy, but then it was very nice long glossy fair hair, and it did not really matter, though she thought it did.

Down they all went to dinner at last, and found Mr. Barnard in the hall in earnest conversation with his brother, who had seen Charley, and did not well know what to make of his case. The worthy farmer looked serious, but soon brightened up at the

sight of so much youth and beauty as the five damsels came trooping in.

'Well, Niece Anna, how d'ye do?' said he, giving the beauty such a kiss and such a shake of the hand as disarranged the curls and almost put her wrist out of joint.

Anna was a little bit annoyed, because she did not want Louisa Colville to see Uncle James just yet. Oh, that wicked pride of hers! But Louisa held out her hand very prettily and shyly when Jessie introduced her, and Anna was pleased to see that she rather took to her bluff uncle, and bore the shake better than she herself had done. In truth Louisa Colville was a girl of strong likings and dislikings. She had taken to Anna, and she took instinctively to every person and thing at Fairfield, even to Dinah's red cheeks, staring blue eyes, and half-open mouth. No, there was one exception,—she did not take to Aunt Betsey.

After dinner, whilst the gentlemen sit round the table, Jessie insists upon the ladies lying down for an hour or so to prepare themselves for the evening. This they do, and are soon fast asleep. Tiny is the first to awake. She is a nervous child, and is frightened at finding herself in that large strange room alone. It is quite dark except for the firelight, which just peeps in through the curtains. Her heart beats quickly. She creeps out of bed, and goes up to the fire. She does not know what o'clock it is, and has an invincible fear of ghosts. She is afraid to ring the bell, so she opens the door and goes into the passage. It is darker still, and she is frightened to death. Charley's room is next door. She thinks she sees a light through a crevice; she taps gently, and is told to come in. Uncle Timothy and Charley are there.

'I am afraid,' she says, trembling very much.

Uncle Timothy goes to her, leads her in, and seats her in an old-fashioned chintz-covered chair by the fire, where she soon falls fast asleep. Uncle Timothy looks kindly at her, strokes her hair, and asks Charley to let her stay with him, then leaves the room. Charley's pencil is soon employed, and the little sleeping angel (for such she looks) is quickly sketched by the young artist: the pale face, half veiled by the curls, one hand underneath the cheek, the other hanging by her side, the feet curled up on the chair, and the firelight flickering about her.

Jessie comes in to take her down-stairs, but thinks she looks too tired for romping, so leaves her to her slumbers; and Charley knows that the excitement of Christmas Eve and Christmas games would be too much for him, so promises Jessie to dine with the party to-morrow, if they will let him

stay as he is to-night. The request granted, Jessie quits the silent pair, and Charley begins to put colours on his picture, until a second Tiny lives upon the white paper.

By and by Tiny awakes. She looks about her, and seems to ask the usual question on such occasions, 'Where am I?' When she sees Charley, she smiles and gets quietly down from her chair, and stands by him as if asking him to speak to her. Strange that he too should feel shy; but he sees only the artist in the child, and thinks her quite old. At last he shows her the half-finished sketch he has before him. She is delighted with it, and says, 'What a pretty child! how beautifully sketched!' She does not know it is her own likeness.

And now they begin to talk of pictures. Tiny has the advantage here, for she has studied all Mr. Eveleigh's paintings, and seen those of her drawing-master. Moreover she has visited the National Gallery, and been twice with Anna to the Exhibition. She can tell of Landseer's horses, of Stanfield's landscapes, and of Cooper's cows and sheep, as yet only visions in the mind of Charley. But Jessie comes again, and, seeing her fresh and sleepless, says she must come down-stairs and see the Christmas sports, so she wishes Charley a reluctant 'good-night.' In hops Anna, and cries, 'Charley, you must come down; it is wretched to have a Christmas Eve without you. You can lie on the settle or in the chimney-corner quite snugly, and we should all be so much happier. There is Jessie running up and down stairs—Pynsent fidgeting--Uncles Timothy and James wondering whether it would hurt you—that tall military Lieutenant Burford begging to say he will bring you down—Captain Burford fussing—and Louisa Colville hoping it is not on her account; so indeed you must come.'

'Very well,' said Charley, looking like a victim, 'you know I should like it, only'—

Off goes Anna like a shot; returns, followed by Pynsent and Nelson, who gently take up Charley in their arms, and carry him down-stairs. The girls seize the mattress and pillows, which are soon arranged upon the settle, and he is almost as soon placed upon them. The dreaded introduction to Miss Colville over, he feels very glad that he has joined such a happy party, and immediately begins in his mind's eye to group beautiful pictures from the flitting and varied forms about him. Tiny seats herself at his feet, and seems pleased with everything, in her own demure, quiet way; and so they wait awhile, till the veritable sports begin.

CHAPTER IX.

'On Christmas Eve the bells were rung,
On Christmas Eve the mass was sung;
The merriest night of all the year,
To eat and drink and make good cheer.'

ALL the family party are assembled in the hall, all the servants and labourers in the kitchen. The tables are covered with mugs, cups, and glasses of all sorts and sizes; cider and ale are there for the men and women, wine for the ladies. Cakes, biscuits, nuts, almonds, and raisins, and all sorts of sweets, are on the hall table; cold beef and bread and cheese on the kitchen table. Filling both hearths, and threatening to burn to death the overpowered 'dogs,' are enormous ashen faggots, bound together by numerous strong dry withs. Already they are beginning to burn, sparkle, and crackle; and the assembled party watch earnestly the withs, cup and glass in hand.

'Crack! snap! bounce!' goes one of the withs, loosening the imprisoned faggot at one end, and giving it up more easily to the flames. 'Hip, hip, hip, hurrah!' sounds from the kitchen as the labourers press into the doorway of the hall. 'Health to Miss Jessie and Master Pynsent,—hip, hip, hurrah!' all the drinking-vessels are drained and filled again.

'Crack! snap! bounce!' goes another, with 'Health to Miss Anna and Master Charley,—hip, hip, hip, hurrah!' sounds through hall and kitchen, both now filled promiscuously with all the guests, rich and poor; cups and glasses drained again.

'Crack! snap! bounce!' goes one of the withs of the kitchen faggot. 'Health to Master Peter, far away over zea, and may he zoon come back again,—hip, hip, hip, hurrah!' more cups and glasses drained.

'I cannot drink more, thank you,' says Miss Colville, sitting down, because she can no longer stand for laughing.

'Oh, you must,' replies Pynsent, filling her wine-glass with hot elder wine, of which delicious spicy beverage there is a great quantity.

'Crack! snap! bounce!' again in the hall. The middle with is parted, and such a bang it gives that Tiny starts back in affright. 'Health to Miss Betsey Burton and Mr. James Barnard,—hip, hip, hip, hurrah!' the coupling of this pair is an understood joke, and causes a suppressed titter.

So fast snap the withs that there is now scarcely time to empty and replenish the glasses between each. 'Captain Burford and

Master Nelson,—hip, hip,—Mr. Timothy Barnard,—hurrah! The strange young Lunnun ladies,—hip, hip,—and all the good Burton family, and all belonging to them, here, there, and everywhere,—hip, hip, hip, hurrah!' and three cheers and musical honours, and 'We won't go home till morning,' led by Captain Burford and Farmer Barnard; and enough hot cider and elder wine to make the whole party very nearly, if not quite, tipsy.

All the withs have cracked, snapped, and bounced, and the big pieces of wood that they bound are left to burn out brightly and cheerily on the hearths. Scarcely have the two divisions of hall and kitchen found their level, when they are aroused by sounds of singing out of doors,—anything but the 'music of the spheres.' All rush into the passage, and open the door. The bright winter moon almost walks in,—she quite looks in,—as do some score of men and women, each bearing pitchers and jugs. And she might look down on many a worse scene: those three pretty girls and that sweet child, all laughing and wondering in front, with their heads poked out into the frosty air, and their white frocks shining in the moonlight; behind them all kinds of male forms and faces looking over their shoulders, and laughing heartily; above them the leafless branches of the creeper, covered with hoar-frost, and gleaming like frosted silver beneath the moon; in front, some in light and some in shadow, grotesque figures, clad in all kinds of cloaks and shawls, red, grey, brown, and yellow, looking and sounding more like the inhabitants of Pandemonium than of Elysium,—men, women, and children, with mouths wide open, carrying vessels, also with mouths wide open, and the said mouths apparently asking to be filled. They are singing a Christmas carol with all their hearts; and as all my readers will not, I hope, be Somersetshire, a verse or two are subjoined for their edification. It must be premised that the word 'wassail' is accented on the last syllable, and that the carollers pronounce it very broad, as 'wassaail.'

'Wassáil and wassáil all round our town:
The cup it is white, and the ale it is brown;
The cup it is made of the good old ashen tree,
And so is your ale of the best barléy.
'Tis our wassáil,—'tis your wassáil,
And joy be to our jolly wassáil.

'Good master and good mistress, a-sitting by the fire,
Whilst we poor souls are out in the mire;
Pray send out your maid with the silver-headed pin,
To open the door and let us all come in.
For 'tis our wassáil,—'tis your wassáil,
And joy be to our jolly wassáil,' etc.

Whilst these and other verses of a similar sort were being sung, a little Christmas pantomime was being carried on amongst the young people. Anna was leaning in the most graceful of attitudes against the door-post, and joining heart and soul in the carol. The rays of the moon on her dark glossy hair were like a crown, and the black eyes shot a volley of incautious, aimless darts out into the night. Louisa Colville had one hand lightly laid on her shoulder, and was holding Tiny with the other. Anna had twined some ivy and holly into her friend's neatly braided golden hair; and the two girls, the brunette and the blonde, contrasted prettily, as they stood carelessly side by side. Leaning against the opposite door-post, deep in shadow, was Nelson Burford, and not far from him Pynsent. Most people will anticipate me when I say that they were neither gazing at the moon nor joining in the singing, but looking very earnestly and admiringly at their *vis-à-vis*. Jessie suddenly appeared, followed by Dinah and one of the men, bearing pitchers brimming with cider. Whilst these were being emptied in the various jugs and cans of the carollers, Tiny slipped away to Charley, and Nelson also vanished; he, however, soon returned, carrying a large red table-cloth with a black border, that he had found somewhere.

'You will surely take cold, young ladies,' he said; 'will you allow me to offer you a very rough shawl?' and, without waiting for permission, he placed the unusual garment across the shoulders of the two girls, who, laughing and blushing, drew it around them.

'Quite *à la* Paul and Virginia,' said Pynsent sarcastically. 'Bless me, how polite you have grown!' he added aside to Nelson.

'How very thoughtful of you, Nelson!' said Jessie, who had been out in the court, helping the wassailers to cider, and who really looked cold.

'He might have given it to you, I think,' growled the Captain.

Here broke in another carol, —

> 'There was an old man who had an old cow,
> And how vor to keep it he couldn't tell how;
> So he built up a barn, to keep his cow warm;
> And a drop of good liquor will do us no harm.
> Harm, boys, harm; harm, boys, harm;
> And a drop of good liquor will do us no harm.'

Away went the motley group of Christmas carollers, and were soon succeeded by others, to whose various ditties the Fairfieldites were content to listen through a closed door, but all of whom had their quota of cider, thanks to Jessie's liberality.

'Please, miss, here's the zingers,' said Dinah confidentially to Jessie.

'Ask them into the kitchen, and give them some bread and cheese and cider,' said Jessie.

Soon a tumult of sounds issued from the kitchen,—violin, violoncello, flute, fife, and 'all kinds of music,' accompanied by every gradation of voice.

'We must come out and hear them,' said Jessie, 'or they will not like it.'

'Oh, by all means,' said Miss Colville, clapping her hands; 'I never had such fun in my life! Have they anything of this sort in India, Mr. Burford?'

Nelson was talking to Anna, who was giving him an animated description of Miss Primmerton. 'I beg your pardon,' he said, starting round.

'Never mind,' said Louisa, and followed Jessie and the rest into the kitchen.

They were obliged to put off all Christmas games to another evening, and to have supper as soon as the singing was concluded. Here Nelson's military politeness to the ladies shone far more brightly than Pynsent's. As it was genuine, and inherited from his excellent father, nobody but Pynsent remarked upon it.

Nelson was a tall, good-looking young man, with very marked features. He had much softness of eye and gentleness of manner; but there was an unmistakeable determination about his mouth, that a physiognomist would have called almost rigid. This was particularly remarkable when he was thoughtful; and he had a habit of putting his left elbow into his right hand, and leaning his cheek upon the back of his left hand, bending his head, and gazing upon seeming vacancy, that displayed this particular feature, and a fine Roman nose, to advantage. It must be confessed that he was stern and obstinate when his temper was much tried, as well as when he had quite made up his mind to anything; and Jessie knew that mildness and gentleness alone could ever succeed in changing his purpose,—at least so it had been when he was young, and so she fancied it was still. His mind once made up, powerful influence was necessary to turn it. She was very much pleased to find him so polite and attentive to the young ladies; and although he could not, of necessity, be now always by her side as he used to be when they were younger, still she frequently met his eye, and its soft light, and the smile that relieved the slight sternness of his mouth, always gave her joy.

They all slept so well that night that there was a regular

scramble to get breakfast over in time to walk a mile and a half to church on Christmas morning. Besides, it took longer than usual to perform the customary greetings. The 'Merry Christmas and Happy New Year when it comes' went round so often, that Tiny found herself repeating it softly at breakfast, she not having had courage to say it aloud. She now mentally addressed each member of the party, and wondered what it all meant. She had never known a 'Merry Christmas,' although she had spent one or two Christmas Days with Anna at Uncle Timothy's. It is sad to think how many children in that great wilderness of London have never known a 'Merry Christmas' or a 'Happy New Year.'

Here everybody was joyous, and she began to feel joyous too. True, it was a moonshiny, not a sunshiny joyousness; still her little heart was glad. Everybody was kind and loving to the child; everybody stroked her soft, silky hair; everybody tried to make her laugh a good, natural laugh; and Mr. James Barnard caught her up in his arms, and seated her on his shoulder, which action, though it terrified, gave her a strange sensation of pleasure. In all probability she would have been upon his head, had not Aunt Betsey suddenly appeared, and checked the farmer's playfulness.

How different was that brisk, cheerful walk through the frost-bitten fields, by the spangled hedgerows, over the crisp ice, along the hard turnpike road, to the prim two and two of Miss Primmerton's 'family' when on their way to church; or the quiet precision of Mrs. Eveleigh, when she led Tiny by the hand to their nearest place of worship! How the pedestrians amused themselves by wishing everybody they met the compliments of the season; and how they admired the little stars of laurel leaves affixed to each pane in the cottage windows by bright red wafers! And the little village church! Louisa Colville and Tiny could not fix their attention on the service, they were so struck by the garden of evergreens around them. Branches of holly and ivy in the pulpit and reading-desk; more branches in all the windows; more standing upright in an incredible manner from every pew.

Mr. Michelson and his son Chatham sat in a very bower of evergreens,—the big, curtained, escutcheoned pew being regularly perforated to admit the stalks. Chatham was continually glancing from between two very pompous holly bushes at the young damsels in their muffs and furs; and even Mr. Michelson occasionally rested his golden eyeglass on his Prayer Book, to take a furtive look into the opposite pew. Once or twice Anna caught his eye, and she could with difficulty refrain from a smile of

greeting. Tiny, too, when admiring that large spray of holly and the tempting red berries just in front of Mr. Michelson, saw that he was looking at her, and wondered who those fine gentlemen could be in the great pew.

Even through Uncle Timothy's pious mind recollections of years gone by crept like a dream at the sight of the Christmas flowers, although his eyes wandered not, and he joined in each response with the soul as well as the lips. He was a fine example to his nephew Pynsent, as he knelt down on the bare boards of the pew, the hassocks being scarce, and preoccupied. Was he not a fine example to many men, both young and old, who enter the house of God professedly to worship Him, yet will not condescend to bend their knees before Him, but sit irreverently, whilst prayers for their eternal salvation and the good of the whole world are offering up? Would they dare to sit thus were they petitioning an earthly monarch for ever so trifling a grace?

There was one at least in that little church whose whole heart was in the service,—doubtless there were many,—but we thank God that we know of one. Jessie's mind strayed not that day from her devotions. She felt that she had so many to pray for, so much to be thankful for, something to appropriate for herself or others in every prayer and thanksgiving of our sublime Liturgy, that she had no time for wandering thoughts, or space for the tempting spirit of evil to creep in. And we have every reason to believe that the petitions of one so harmless and humble-minded were heard by Him who, when on earth, set such a lovely example of purity and humility.

When the service was concluded, our party walked briskly home. Captain Burford and Nelson were awaiting them, they having been to their own parish church; and roast beef, turkey, and plum-puddings were craving to be put upon the table. With good appetites and good tempers all sat down to dinner, and nobody envied Mr. Michelson and his son Chatham's lonely splendour at the Hall. In the kitchen were some dozen aged women, pensioners of Jessie's, who were to partake of the good Christmas cheer. Charles had a snug little round table close to his couch, and Tiny insisted—whispering her insistance to Jessie—upon carrying his plate to and fro, and waiting on him; she thought a great deal more of his dinner than of her own. Jessie and Pynsent had given place to Aunt Betsey and Farmer Barnard, who took, at their request, the top and bottom of the table, the sides of which were filled by well-assorted pairs, who had fallen together nobody knew how. Uncle Timothy and his dear Jessie, Captain Burford and Tiny, on one side; Pynsent

and Louisa Colville, Nelson and Anna, on the other. All looked pleased except Captain Burford, and he was unusually silent, in spite of Jessie's efforts at conversation.

'Let me give you some bread sauce, Miss Annabella,' said Nelson.

'Why are you so stiff as to call me "Miss"?' inquired Anna, laughing. 'You do not call Jessie *Miss* Jessie.'

'Oh! because you are so changed that I cannot look upon you as the Anna of former times; whereas your sister is much as she used to be.'

'And why am I so much more changed than Jessie?'

'You were a little saucy child when I saw you last, and now'—

'And now?'— repeated Anna anxiously.

'She is a very saucy young woman,' interrupted Pynsent rather snappishly.

'Thank you, Pynsent,' said Anna. 'You might at least have let *Mr.* Burford find that out for himself,' with a stress upon the 'Mr.'

'Mr. Burford is not likely to find out anything unpleasing in connection with Anna Burton,' said Nelson, with a glance of admiration at Anna's beautiful face.

'Now, Nelson, I hope you have not grown a flatterer,' said his father; 'I heard what you said.'

'I never flatter willingly,' replied Nelson, colouring.

Jessie had also heard what Nelson said, and seen the glance. Why did she heave an involuntary sigh, as she perceived that Anna was neither insensible to the compliment nor the admiration?

Christmas Day passed off quickly and happily, and many plans were formed for the ensuing week, of which more in their proper places. The gentlemen, old and young, were very attentive to the ladies,—accompanied them in a long walk, and made themselves useful and agreeable, as gallant, well-mannered gentlemen should do; only once or twice had Anna to scold Pynsent for some breach of politeness to Louisa Colville, and to receive a 'Do you think me a dandy or an exquisite, Anna?' from Pynsent in return.

The following morning they were honoured by an unexpected call from Mr. Michelson; he came about the election, but as the gentlemen were out, he found other matter of conversation for the ladies. They were variously occupied: Aunt Betsey was knitting, as usual; Jessie was giving orders and superintending household matters; Anna was netting a purse; Louisa Colville was reading; and Tiny and Charley were busily engaged in drawing at the little table placed by the couch of the latter.

A large bright fire was burning in the grate of the parlour where they were sitting, and altogether they looked as cheerful and pretty a party as could be. When the greetings and introductions were over, Mr. Michelson said, addressing Anna,—

'And is it possible that you can be the child that I met some years ago? You are exactly what your aunt was when I had first the pleasure of her acquaintance,—and I suppose you are now perfectly accomplished, you play, you sing, you dance, *vous parlez Français, e Italiano. Ah! parla ella Italiano?*'

'*Sì, signore,*' replied Anna, with perfect self-possession.

They then began a short conversation in Italian, in which Mr. Michelson said he would give worlds to show Anna the beauties of Italy, and take her himself to see the magnificent works of art, *di quel paese magnifico.* This led to his asking what the young artists at the side table were about, still in Italian.

'Tiny,' said Anna, 'bring Mr. Michelson that old castle you have just been drawing; he would like to see it. She has drawn it from imagination entirely, Mr. Michelson.'

Tiny looked frightened, but obeyed.

'Who is that child?' asked Mr. Michelson.

'A ward of my uncle's,' replied Anna.

'What is your name, little girl?' asked Mr. Michelson, heedless of the drawing she held.

'Sophia, sir; but they call me Tiny, because Anna thinks me so little.'

'Sophia what?' asked Mr. Michelson.

'Sophia Eveleigh,' replied Tiny, looking terrified at such repeated questions.

Mr. Michelson seemed satisfied, and the large vein on his forehead that had started out at the name 'Sophia,' decreased at that of Eveleigh. He took the drawing, and with a voice of pure astonishment asked if it were possible that the child could have, herself, done the drawing she presented.

'Yes,' she said timidly.

'And is my old friend Charley as clever as you are?' he asked.

'Much cleverer, sir,' replied Tiny, peeping into his face. For the first time, her eyes met his; she did not like their expression, but quietly crept back to her chair, near Charles. Mr. Michelson followed her, and whilst professedly looking over Charles's drawing, was gazing fixedly at her.

'My nephew is said to have a great talent for drawing, Mr. Michelson,' said Aunt Betsey, 'and he is very anxious to become an artist; but I am sure his father would not have liked him to stoop so low.'

'Low, madam!' said Mr. Michelson, starting as if from a dream. '*Superba! Brava!* Is that your sketch of your sister, sir?' he exclaimed enthusiastically, looking for the first time at Charley's drawing, which was a likeness of Anna. 'Self-taught! You must be better taught. Madam, it would be a disgrace to let this talent be buried here. Your nephew must go abroad: he must study.'

Charley sighed.

'I could give him introductions,—facilitate his studying,—make him one of the first of English artists, or I am no judge of talent.'

Charley lifted himself up on his couch, his face flushed with sudden joy.

'Oh, could you?' he exclaimed; 'would you? will you?'

'I believe I could and would assist you,' said Mr. Michelson, gazing with admiration on the lovely portrait.

The colour again faded from Charles's cheeks, as he suddenly remembered his seemingly incurable weakness. Mr. Michelson perceived it, and remembered that he had heard of his never having recovered from the fever.

'We will talk of this another day,' he said; 'perhaps you will now show me some more sketches?'

Anna rose and produced a rough portfolio, full of drawings, which she displayed to Mr. Michelson, one after another, and his genuine love of the art, and perfect connoisseurship, enabled him to appreciate their different merits. There were some of Tiny's amongst them, equally clever, but in a different way. Charley's were all from nature,—hers either copies or imaginative sketches, as she had had no opportunities of studying from nature. Mr. Michelson's love of the beautiful was called forth in all its bearings. Here stood Anna, her graceful figure bending over the table by his side; there Tiny, whose pale spirituality troubled him; and here again the tokens of great natural genius in paintings of no mean beauty. Anywhere else, Louisa Colville would have attracted him, but she sank into mediocrity beside the loveliness of her friend.

And the gipsy Anna knew her power. She perceived that her womanly charms had completed the conquest that the childish graces had begun, and she was proud to have made a temporary slave of the great Mr. Michelson, though she did not display her satisfaction.

After some general conversation about the election, and canvassing the ladies, Mr. Michelson took his leave, and Anna was ringing his praises when Uncle Timothy and Pynsent returned from their walk, to undergo a repetition of his sayings and doings.

CHAPTER X.

'On blithesome frolics bent, the youthful swains,
While every work of man is laid at rest,
Fond o'er the river crowd, in various sport
And revelry dissolved.

And as they sweep
On sounding skates, a thousand different ways,
In circling poise, swift as the winds along,
The then gay land is maddened into joy.'—THOMSON.

ON the following Monday Jessie and Pynsent left home immediately after breakfast, and all Anna's curiosity could not find out where they were going. As they walked quickly on, their voices sounded cheerily through the frosty air, and it was evident they were bound on no unpleasant errand. In about half an hour they reached a smart gentleman's house,—a house, at least, built some hundred yards off the road, and enclosed by shrubs and iron palings.

They walked up a short drive, rang the bell, and asked if Mr. Skinner was at home. They were shown into a room originally intended for a library, but converted into an office, by means of innumerable parchments and papers. Here, at a large desk, sat a little shrivelled-up man; his skin looked like one of his own parchments, and his eyes like two mice, eating their way through it.

'How do you do, Miss Burton? how do you do, Mr. Pynsent?' he said, expressing himself very slowly, and apparently with difficulty. 'You are the most regular paymasters I have—always to the day; if your father had been like you, debts would never have accumulated as they did.'

Pynsent took a leather pocket-book out of his pocket, from whence he drew a large packet of bank-notes.

'There are fifty pounds for the last half-year's interest,' he said, placing a portion of the notes before Mr. Skinner.

'Thank you,' said Mr. Skinner, slowly counting and examining the notes. Finding them satisfactory, he wrote a receipt, acknowledging the half-year's interest on two thousand pounds at five per cent. Pynsent took it, placed it in his pocket-book, and again began counting bank-notes, whilst Mr. Skinner looked on with a pleased astonishment in his twinkling eyes, as if some unexpected good luck were happening to him.

'Now, Mr. Skinner,' said Pynsent, 'I have the pleasure of paying you two hundred pounds, in part of the principal, which will reduce our debt to you, for the money you were good enough

to lend my father upon mortgage on Fairfield, to eighteen hundred pounds, and the annual interest to ninety.'

Mr. Skinner opened his eyes with wonder, as he took the roll of bank-notes, and said,—

'How is this, Mr. Pynsent, how is this? Have you had a legacy left, or stepped into a good profession?'

'My sister has managed to put by from twenty to thirty pounds a year for the last eight or nine years, and you will soon find that the two hundred are thus raised without legacies.'

Mr. Skinner looked up from the notes he was counting, at the smiling rosy face of Jessie; he contemplated her so inquiringly that she blushed, and almost laughed, as she said,—

'Oh, Mr. Skinner, I assure you Pynsent has saved as well as I. He put by something every year out of his small allowance in London, and if he had been at home when the hundred pounds were ready, we should have brought part of the money before.'

'You are a wonderful young woman,' said Mr. Skinner very slowly, giving emphasis to each word. 'Here is a stamped receipt, and now you must come and take something.'

'O no! we have only just breakfasted, thank you,' said Jessie.

'By all means, if you please, Mr. Skinner,' said Pynsent; 'a frosty walk, and a hasty breakfast before it, have given me a second appetite.'

Jessie looked reproachfully at Pynsent, who smiled knowingly at her in return. Mr. Skinner asked them to follow him, and led them into a dining-room.

'My children are just gone to school,' said Mr. Skinner; 'they would have been very glad to have seen you, Miss Jessie. They often talk of you, and say how kind you are to them.'

Jessie had no idea that she had ever been kind to them.

He rang the bell, and ordered refreshments. The servant stared. She went away, however, and returned with bread, cheese, butter, and cider. He then carefully unlocked the side-board, and produced a few dry biscuits and a decanter.

Pouring out half a glass of wine, he offered it to Jessie, together with the biscuits. She declined both, but on his pressing her very much, took a biscuit, which she found it impossible to eat. Pynsent, on the contrary, seemed to be seized with an unusually voracious appetite and an uncommon thirst. Not only did he drink Mr. Skinner's health in one glass of wine, but he nearly emptied the decanter. Then he thought it necessary to try what kind of cider Mr. Skinner's apples made, and finally fell upon the edibles.

'And you really saved that two hundred pounds out of your small property, miss?' said Mr. Skinner to Jessie. 'You are an honour to your family.' This he repeated more than once, until she began to feel uncomfortable. He questioned her closely concerning the expenses of her housekeeping, to which Pynsent answered that she was really so very stingy there was no living with her; and then he said, laying great stress on each separate word,—

'Well done, Miss Jessie! well done, Miss Jessie!' and proceeded to assure her that if her forefathers had done the same, she and her brothers and sister would be rich people now.

At last Pynsent had wished Mr. Skinner his last 'Merry Christmas,' and told him that he would do himself the pleasure of lunching with him again shortly, and Jessie had touched the tips of his bony fingers, and they were fairly out of the gates.

'Now, Jessie, I declare I can walk no farther,' said Pynsent; 'I think I shall go back and dine with old Skinner.'

'What is the matter with you, Pynsent? you certainly are out of your senses.'

'That hard cheese and sour cider will be sure to give me an apoplectic fit. But didn't I do the old sinner? Why, Jessie, if he had but turned his head, I meant to pocket the remainder of the loaf; I really could not eat it. Hurrah! The first meal that anybody ever got out of him. Nobody ever ate too much before in his house.'

'What carriage is that coming up the road?' interrupted Jessie. 'Isn't Nelson driving?'

They hastened to meet the vehicle, and to their astonishment found that it contained Charley and Tiny.

'He was determined that I should not finish my sketch to-day,' said Charley, laughing, 'and took me up in his arms, paint all over, and brought me here, on this mattress, as comfortably as possible.'

'And said there was room for me,' whispered Tiny, 'and I like it so much!'

'Now, Jessie, you squeeze in opposite the little one,' said Nelson, 'and Pynsent can walk back, and escort the other ladies. My father is waiting, and the moor is full of people.'

Jessie got in, feeling great admiration of Nelson's kindness to Charley and Tiny.

They soon arrived at the Captain's house, and were in due time followed by the rest of the party. Charley was first snugly settled in a large *chaise longue* by the library fire, with a variety of papers and magazines before him, and told to ring if he wanted

anything; and then the Captain's preparations began. He had procured a quantity of list from all the tailors and sempstresses in the town, and he told the young men to twist it round the feet of the ladies.

'Now, Jessie, my dear, you are the eldest. Come, Nelson.'

Jessie put forth her foot, clad in a large, sensible pair of thick boots, and a very tidy foot and ankle it was.

'I think you had better let me do it myself, Nelson,' she said; but Nelson insisted, and succeeded in twisting the list round the foot, and finally pinning it securely.

Anna and Louisa's feet were simultaneously extended, and similarly operated upon by both the young men. Nelson admired Anna's pretty little feet, but agreed with the Captain in thinking her boots too thin for winter.

'You would do for Iceland, Miss Colville,' said the Captain; 'those fur boots and that muff and fur cape would be just the things for a Russian winter, and are almost as good for such a day as this on our moor. Ah, there is the pretty little foot! Come to me, Tiny, and let me dress it up. Oh, you cold little mouse! you are not half wrapped up. Nelson, tell Jane to bring down that big cape lined with fur.'

By and by Tiny was scarcely to be seen, thanks to 'the big cape lined with fur,' and Charley longed to make a picture of her little pale face peeping out from her curls like a white rosebud from its leaves. Miss Burton made rather a point of trimming her own boots, but Nelson overcame her modest scruples; and at last they were all ready, and all rough-shod.

They went through the back door and down a large garden, that was very pretty in summer, but now covered with frost. At the bottom was a summer-house, from whence Nelson procured skates, and whither he called Pynsent to help him to drag forth a large arm-chair, across the legs of which he had caused two pieces of sharpened iron to be placed. At the bottom of the garden was a river hard frozen, over which a rustic bridge led to an immense moor, stretching as far as the eye could reach on all sides. It had been under water during late floods, and was now a huge sheet of hard ice.

The full, broad, bare-faced winter sun is pouring a flood of pale dazzling light upon the ice-field, which gleams and sparkles, but does not melt at his glances,—very much like a cold-hearted flirt, who receives, without apparent return, the adoration of a lover, and is unmoved by his devotion. Many-coloured dresses of smart ladies and children spring up like flowers upon the plain, and contrast prettily with the sparkling ice on which they slip and slide about; and gentlemen in skates flit here and

there, literally cutting through sunbeams above and below, and looking in the far distance like motes at play. Here noisy children are making long slides, whilst their merry voices ring through the frosty air as they plump down in all kinds of unseemly postures; there a luckless and unpractised skater may be seen seated in undignified attitude, with his legs in the air; whilst the red-cheeked damsel, who is laughing at him, suddenly finds herself prostrate at his side. Yonder a group of old and young are helping one another over a difficult place, whilst near them some three or four 'unprotected females' have come to a stand, afraid to proceed at all.

When our little party came upon this frozen lake they paused awhile to look about them, and to wonder where such numbers of people could have come from. It was almost as large a fair as that on the Thames in the time of the Great Frost. Uncle Timothy and Tiny were decided cowards, and crept along, literally 'feeling their way,' while Nelson and Pynsent had donned their skates, and were gliding on quietly behind the arm-chair, that slid along as glibly and invitingly as possible.

'Who will have a slide in our sledge?' asked Nelson, addressing the ladies.

Each was too timid to begin.

'Let me set the example,' cried Pynsent. 'Now, Nelson, off with you!'

Pynsent got into the chair, and off it flew like a bird, guided by Nelson from behind. It was something new, and everybody stopped to look on.

'I am to have half the profits,' exclaimed a young man, skating up to Nelson. 'It goes famously;' and he put himself at Nelson's side at the back of the chair, and they all three went on together, until they returned to the original starting-point.

'Now then,' said Pynsent, getting out, 'who's afraid?'

'How d'ye do, Captain Burford?' said the stranger. 'Will you introduce me?' he added, glancing at the ladies.

'Allow me to present Mr. Chatham Michelson—I beg your pardon, Captain Michelson—to Miss Colville, the Miss Burtons, —Mr. Barnard, the brother of an old friend of yours, and tenant of your father's,' said the Captain.

Captain Michelson bowed to the ladies, and held out his hand to Uncle Timothy, saying that he was delighted to make his acquaintance. Uncle Timothy, in his surprise at being expected to shake hands, forgot the ice and slipped, but Captain Michelson held him up dexterously,—in short, almost caught him in his arms. This excited the risible faculties of Anna, who burst into a hearty laugh. Hers was such a ringing, merry laugh, that it

sounded through the frosty air like a peal of distant bells; and in spite of her aunt's displeased countenance it rang on, until Captain Michelson had safely landed Uncle Timothy again, and recovered his own equilibrium, by which time everybody else was laughing. Captain Michelson caught Anna's eye, and was infected by her merriment. Indeed, the white teeth, shining beneath the red lips like pearls set in rubies, had laughter in them,—to say nothing of that bright black eye, which seemed to shoot sunbeams.

'I have a great mind to upset you, Anna,' said Uncle Timothy.

'Then we should surely fall together, uncle,' replied Anna.

'Now, Miss Colville, will you take the chair?' proposed Pynsent; 'we shall lose our fare if we stand laughing any longer.'

'I am half afraid,' replied Louisa, 'but I will try, if you will promise not to upset me.'

'We promise, we promise,' cried the three young men simultaneously; and in a second the chair and its attendants were careering about, to the great admiration of everybody.

'What a handsome young man!' said Uncle Timothy, as Chatham Michelson shot over the ice, now, like his companions, impelling the chair, and now skating by its side.

So thought the ladies.

Back in due course of time came the chair in triumph.

'Now, Aunt Betsey,' said Pynsent, 'you must try;' and, after some pressing, Aunt Betsey was whirled away.

Captain Michelson met some friends, and stopped to speak to them. The chair went on without him, and before he came up with it again, Anna was seated in it, Pynsent pushing, and Nelson at her side.

'Oh, it is delightful!' said Anna, as she looked from Nelson to Captain Michelson; 'how could you have thought of such a thing?'

'All done upon mathematical principles, I assure you. Was it not, Burford?' said Captain Michelson.

'Three male Graces around a female Apollo,' said a voice near. It was Mr. Michelson, senior, and Anna thought that Chatham looked vexed when he saw him.

This was a particularly long ride, or drive, or slide, or whatever you may be pleased to call it, and a very merry one, for Anna did nothing but talk and laugh, and her swains were not backward in joining her.

'Your turn now, Jessie,' said Nelson, when they suddenly came across their friends, who had changed quarters.

'Take Tiny first,' said Jessie.

'I tell you what it is, Jessie,' replied Nelson, 'the chair is my

own particular property, and if you will not get into it next, nobody else shall.'

Nelson looked resolved, and Jessie obeyed.

But Captain Michelson started the chair, and began to talk to Jessie as if he were quite at home with her. 'I know you very well by report, Miss Burton. Poor Miss Rutherford met you once or twice at different cottages, so she told me, and spoke of you with much regard.'

'Where is she now?' asked Jessie. 'I liked her very much.'

'Nobody seems to know,' answered Chatham; 'she went away suddenly, and has never been heard of since, I believe.'

It was now Nelson's turn to disappear, beckoned for by Mr. Michelson, *père*.

'Will you kindly lend your chair for Miss Erskine? she is dying to try it. She is with Sir Thomas Mansford's party,—a great heiress, so you had better throw a cast for her. Tell Chatham that I want him.'

Off flew Nelson.

'Michelson, your father wants you.'

'Then he can't have me just at present,' was the dutiful reply.

'He wishes us to give some Miss Erskine a turn; or rather, Miss Erskine wishes it, or both,' said Nelson.

'Very likely, but let her wait,' said Chatham dryly, and went on talking to Jessie.

'You don't want me any longer,' said Pynsent, when they stopped again; 'I am tired of skating;' and he began to unbuckle his skates.

'Nonsense, Pynsent!' said Nelson; 'don't give up.'

'Oh, I'll begin again by and by! but I am not going to run after Mr. Michelson's heiresses, nor to skate after them either.'

Here Mr. Michelson appeared. After speaking briefly to those around, he repeated his request.

'We will return for those other young ladies you mentioned directly,' said Chatham, addressing Jessie. 'You had better get in, father, and we will pilot you over.'

Away went the chair, with Mr. Michelson therein, a good half-mile across the moor, to where a party of well-dressed ladies and gentlemen were standing. Bows and introductions passed, and Miss Erskine was immediately satisfied. She was rather a handsome girl, but very stout. The 'wheels of the chariot' certainly 'tarried' somewhat, but Miss Erskine was so charmed with their motion that there was no getting her out of it.

'One turn more! one turn more!' was the young lady's cry, until at last Captain Michelson and Nelson fairly halted before her party.

Meanwhile the Captain (we call Captain Burford *the* Captain *par excellence*), Uncle Timothy, and Pynsent, had been escorting a number of ladies over the ice, had set Tiny and some other little girls to slide, and had slidden themselves to show them how. Anna had found the ice so irresistible, that she had been sliding too, and Louisa Colville had been somewhat scandalized by her friend's performance. Just as Anna was in the middle of a triumphantly long slide, however, up came the chair.

'Now, Miss Annabella, we have caught you in the act,' said Nelson, 'and you shall be punished by having the very last and worst performance on our stage. Would you like one more whirl before the sun fairly goes away?'

Was anything ever more lovely, either in nature or art, than Anna's face? Her cheeks, made brilliant by exercise, frost, sunshine, and blushes; her jet-black hair, somewhat disarranged by her exertions, and her eyes, like two bright, wandering butterflies as they were, glancing archly from swain to swain. Aurora never stepped into her car at morning, more radiant in beauty and bewitching in grace, than did the half-abashed, half-conscious girl into hers. Alas, that she should know her power! But how can she help it? Look at every individual about her, and see the glances of admiration in every eye.

'Come, Tiny,' she said, 'you must have one turn with me.'

They placed the child on her lap.

'That girl will be ruined,' said Lady Mansford to Mr. Michelson; 'she is really too beautiful to be thrown upon the world and her own resources, as I hear she is to be.'

Mr. Michelson put up his eyeglass, and did not appear to be particularly pleased when he saw his son Chatham in animated conversation with the beauty, and Nelson and he both drinking in all kinds of feelings with her sparkling glances. They were so much occupied in listening to her merry sallies, that they did not perceive the top of an old post, that projected about a foot above the ice, on one side, or Mr. Michelson's party on the other. Suddenly one of the slides on which the chair was placed struck violently against the post, and such was the force of the concussion, that Tiny was thrown out, almost at the feet of Mr. Michelson, and the chair upset, with its burden, on the ice.

Now all was confusion. The two young men assisted Anna to rise, who, if not seriously injured, was hurt by the fall. They placed her gently on the chair, and she tried to laugh off the accident, but there was an evident longing, on the part of her mouth, either to cry or groan. However, she was soon diverted from her own pain by a buzz of voices in consternation near her. She looked round, and the young men's glances followed

hers. They had all forgotten Tiny for the moment. Now they saw her in Mr. Michelson's arms, apparently lifeless, and Lady Mansford and Miss Erskine unfastening her bonnet, and stanching blood that was flowing from her temples. Anna went to her, despite her pain.

'Tiny, darling,' she exclaimed, 'are you dead? Have we killed her? Oh, Mr. Michelson, for Heaven's sake, tell me!'

'I think she is only stunned,' said Lady Mansford.

As to Mr. Michelson, he was almost as pale as the child he held in his arms.

'You had better put her at once into the chair,' said Nelson, 'and take her to our house. Anna, do you think you can carry her?'

'O yes!' said Anna, tears rolling down her cheeks.

They helped Anna into the chair, and Mr. Michelson laid the child half-reluctantly in her lap.

They were soon at the bottom of Captain Burford's garden. The young men took off their skates, and Nelson, taking Tiny, still senseless, in his arms, ran up the walk to the house. Chatham offered his arm to Anna, and they followed slowly. She had slightly sprained her ankle, and pain and fright had chased all the colour from her cheeks. Thus they reached the house.

CHAPTER XI.

'Love at first sight, firstborn, and heir to all,
Made this night thus. Henceforward squall nor storm
Could keep me from the Eden where she dwelt.'—TENNYSON.

MR. MICHELSON wished Lady Mansford and her party a hasty good-morning, promising to see them again at dinner-time, and hurried off in search of the doctors. He felt a sudden and unaccountable interest in the fate of the child. As she lay, like a wounded dove, motionless at his feet, and afterwards in his arms, feelings had entered into his soul that had never found a place there before. Hitherto his love had been passion, his admiration self-gratification, his friendship mere temporary sensation; even his paternal sentiments had been those of gratified vanity if his son did well and was admired, of angry pique if he did ill and was evil spoken of. Now the first seed of some heavenly flower was invisibly sown in his heart, and he felt it germinating quickly. He looked on the pale, stricken child, and would have risked his being, for the moment, to recall the

poor lamb to consciousness. When he had once seen her before, he had admired her tender beauty, but now he loved her appealing innocence and crushed sweetness. He went hither and thither until he found the Burtons, cursing the slippery ice, the chair, the folly of the young men, the very attractions of Anna, to which he had himself bowed.

'From the sublime to the ridiculous' we must now descend; the 'step' is taken to see the various efforts of Captain Burford, Uncle Timothy, Pynsent, Mr. Michelson, Aunt Betsey, and Miss Colville to hurry across the ice. Jessie, active by nature and habit, has soon outstripped them, and reached the garden without any great drawbacks, but they seemed to find slips and slides at every step. Poor Uncle Timothy, whose ardour was the greatest,—next, perhaps, to that of Mr. Michelson,—was the slowest to proceed, and must have been twenty times on his nose had not Pynsent been near to help him up; it was a decidedly painful position for two doctors hastening to an insensible patient. Then the list came off Aunt Betsey's shoes, and she could not venture to stir a step until it was put on again. Mr. Michelson, out of all patience, went on before, and had made some progress, when he thoughtlessly stepped on one of the long slides left by the boys, and fell, or rather sat, down somewhat unmajestically for so portly a personage. Once down on this most glassy slide, he could not get up again, and was sprawling, with hands and feet slipping onwards, and again cursing all hard frosts, when the rest came up to him. Louisa Colville and Pynsent were trying to smother a laugh, when Aunt Betsey, condoling with Mr. Michelson and forgetful of herself, slipped in her turn, and, catching hold of that gentleman just as he was managing to rise, pulled him down again. Gravity fell with them, and Captain Burford's loud, hearty laugh was echoed by the three others, to the great disgust of the prostrate pair.

They all reached the house at last, and found Tiny already restored to consciousness, lying on Charley's chair, who, to the astonishment of everybody, was sitting by her side. Jessie was bathing her temples, and following up the remedies that Charley had begun before she came. Sudden fear had done for Charles what extreme weakness and nervousness had prevented his having the courage to do for himself,—made him move voluntarily from the reclining posture in which he had been so long placed.

Uncle Timothy and Pynsent said there was no serious injury, but that she must be kept very quiet; and also that Anna must do her best to be still for a day or two, as her ankle was already much swelled. Fortunately for Mr. Michelson, Aunt Betsey was

there, and he heard from her, who thought of him when nobody else did, of Tiny's state. He begged her to ask the doctors to allow him to see the child before he left, as he should feel less anxious about her when he knew how she looked. Permission being granted, he went into the library, and his son slipped in after him; it was quite an hospital. Tiny put her hand into Mr. Michelson's, and whispered that she was not hurt, and thanked him timidly for his kindness. Everybody wondered at his anxious face and his gentle manner to the little girl. Chatham meanwhile was standing by Anna's sofa, and listening to her hearty laughter over the whole affair. Jessie, as usual, was occupied with the patient, and to her Mr. Michelson turned, with a look of great complacency, as if he would express his gratitude for some favour bestowed on himself. Perhaps he never before admired any one for mere goodness. So true it is that there is a deep, intricate spring somewhere or other in every heart, be it selfish or depraved, that a certain peculiar touch can move; once moved, it is not difficult to open many closed compartments, that would, but for that first delicate touch, have been closed for ever. Mr. Michelson bent over the fair child and kissed her forehead before he took his departure, and seemed almost to have forgotten his former favourite, Anna, in his sudden fancy for her.

When they were gone, Captain Burford decided that it would be impossible for any of the others to go home that night, and told Jessie that she and his housekeeper must improvise beds, since sleep in his house they should. As the house was a large one, there was no great difficulty, especially as Pynsent and Nelson arranged to repose on two old-fashioned sofas in the drawing-room by the fire.

During the course of the afternoon, Pynsent communicated to Captain Burford the circumstances of his and Jessie's morning's interview with Mr. Skinner. The Captain was in raptures.

'I declare,' he said, 'there never was anybody in the world like Jessie; there was only one of her came over in three ships, I am morally certain. What a lucky fellow Nelson will be!'

A shade passed over Pynsent's brow.

'I say, Captain,' he began, and paused.

'And what do you say, Surgeon?' asked the Captain.

'That I think we shall be doing no good, either to Nelson or Jessie, by talking of the old agreement between you and my father about their marriage.'

'Odds bobs, sir! what do you mean? I shall talk of what I like. Am I, at my age, to be tutored by a pack of youngsters?'

'I beg your pardon, sir,' said Pynsent, 'only I felt assured

that you would not like to annoy Jessie, and I think it might annoy her.'

'I'll be hanged, Master Pynsent, if ever I annoyed her in my life, or ever shall!' responded the Captain, dashing out of the room, and slamming the door after him.

The cause of his irascibility was Nelson's very decided devotion to Anna's sprained ankle, to the total estrangement of his attention from Jessie.

In the evening, when they were all grouped round a large fire, telling riddles and ghost stories by the firelight, the Captain, who had been hitherto a listener, suddenly exclaimed,—

'Now I will tell you one of the prettiest stories that I have heard for a long time.' And he forthwith began to detail, with illustrations and additions of his own, the history of Pynsent and Jessie's two hundred pounds. He used feigned names, and mixed it up with many sea phrases, so as to conceal the actual *dramatis personæ*, but he made the little episode so charming, that everybody exclaimed, 'What a beautiful sketch! what a delightful, worthy, amiable pair! Do not you like that now, Jessie?'—whilst poor Jessie was blushing redder than the fire.

'I think Jessie could have done that,' whispered Tiny to Charles, who had now resumed his *chaise longue*, and had the child, as usual, close to him.

The Captain overheard.

'So she could, little 'cute Tiny, and so she did: that was Jessie and Pynsent. What do you think of that, Nelson? I take it you have not heard anything better than that in India. What a wife she will make! I only wish you were worthy of her, but you are not.'

'I do not think there is any one in the world worthy of Jessie,' said Charles, with sudden animation.

'You are trying hard to spoil her by flattery,' said Uncle Timothy, taking the blushing girl's hand playfully; 'we are all liable to be spoiled by that dangerous charm.'

'Not Jessie,' said Nelson emphatically; 'she is one of the few who has been, and will be, always the same.'

Jessie looked up involuntarily at the speaker, and a tear swelled in her eyes as she met Nelson's glance; it was beaming with the old affectionate admiration,—the one look that seemed to say, 'There is nobody in the world like her!'

'I must run away, I see,' she said hurriedly, rising and going towards the door.

'No, no,' said half-a-dozen voices, and 'No' acted Nelson, as he ran to the door and stood with his back to it.

Jessie returned to her seat, and by some strange chance Nelson

found himself by her side, and the foot of Anna's sofa was deserted. The Captain looked pleased once more, and the evening went off very merrily.

Meanwhile Mr. Michelson and Chatham were having a fashionable unnaturally late dinner at Sir Thomas Mansford's, and in the course of the evening the following conversation took place.

'I cannot help thinking she would suit Lady Georgiana,' said Lady Mansford, 'if she were not so handsome. You have no idea what a disagreeable thing it is sometimes to have a very handsome governess.'

'But,' suggested Mr. Michelson, 'my sister-in-law has no grown-up sons, or even grown-up nephews, except Chatham, who never goes near her.'

'And if she had,' said Chatham, 'she would be superior to such vulgar prejudice. My Aunt Georgiana is a very sensible woman.'

'Many sensible women object to beautiful governesses,' said Lady Mansford, laughing. 'For my own part, if I had children, I think I would rather have a good-looking than an ugly teacher for them, because they are generally discriminators and lovers of beauty. But I certainly like Miss Burton. There is a certain aristocratic air about her, derived both from nature and family, that bespeaks the real lady; and I should be sorry to see her placed with low-bred people, who would treat her as an inferior.'

'That my aunt would never do,' said Chatham; 'besides, so beautiful a girl ought to be with some one who would take an interest in her well-doing, and who would act the chaperon, if not the mother, by her, and tell her what to do in difficult cases.'

'What difficult cases?' asked Mr. Michelson. 'I think women always know how to take care of themselves; and I am sure that black-eyed little coquette will not be behind-hand.'

'Poor girl! she has no mother,' said Lady Mansford. 'And in being cast upon the world will need a friend, or I greatly mistake. What do you really think of Lady Georgiana?'

'That if you will write to her, and sound her upon the subject, I will sound the Burtons; and perhaps, between us, we may do either some good or some harm.'

The following day Mr. Michelson called on Captain Burford, and, after having been closeted with him some time, proposed sending for Anna to ask her whether she would like to accept a situation as governess, if one were offered to her. She came limping and laughing into the room, and Mr. Michelson inquired

about her sprain, and then for Tiny; both were pretty well, and she was ready to go upon the ice again.

'Do you intend returning to London?' asked Mr. Michelson.

'I believe so,' replied Anna, with a blank look; 'I have no choice.'

'If I might be allowed to ask, would you prefer going elsewhere?'

'Anywhere in the world,' said Anna. 'I hate Miss Primmerton's, and cannot bear the idea of going back.'

'Then you would, perhaps, prefer entering a family as governess, if a good situation were to offer?'

'O yes! I should like that fifty times better.'

'Lady Mansford told me yesterday that my late wife's sister, Lady Georgiana Meredith, was a short time ago inquiring for a governess for her two little girls: we thought it might suit you.'

'Delightfully!' said Anna, without further consideration. 'Will you write directly, and I can go after the holidays.'

Mr. Michelson smiled, and fixed his full, uncomfortable eyes on her animated face. He admired, and she knew it. 'He will do anything for me,' she thought.

'You settle matters as quickly as we are obliged to do in a storm, Anna,' said Captain Burford. 'We must consult the other authorities before we decide.'

'At all events,' said Mr. Michelson, 'I will make the necessary inquiries.'

'Oh, thank you, Mr. Michelson!' said Anna. 'Where does Lady Georgiana live?'

'I am afraid that will be the most disagreeable part of the matter,' replied Mr. Michelson, 'for her abode is a great way off. She lives almost wholly in Wales.'

'That is charming; I long to go into Wales. Only fancy, Captain Burford, living amongst those grand mountains, and seeing goats and shepherdesses with broad hats and crooks, and waterfalls and ravines, and picturesque peasantry, and I do not know what besides. Oh, I must run and tell Jessie directly!' and away she went.

'I am afraid the barren hills of Cardiganshire will disappoint her,' said Mr. Michelson. 'How is your little friend?'

'Will you come into the drawing-room, and there you will find her. They all remained here last night,' returned the Captain.

In the drawing-room not only Tiny was found, but, to Mr. Michelson's evident annoyance, his son Chatham. Anna was not talking of the Welsh mountains, but was declaring herself quite ready to go upon the ice and into the chair again.

'I think you had better not, Anna,' interposed Jessie; 'you may have another upset.'

'You know, Miss Burton,' said Chatham, 'it is always safest to travel by the coach that broke down last, because the coachman is always more careful, and the horses are better harnessed.'

Jessie shook her head.

'I do not think your brother will go with you again,' said Louisa Colville, 'and Mr. Burford said he had had enough of it.'

'It is possible to do very well without Nelson and Pynsent,' cried Anna. 'At all events we can go down upon the ice. Uncle Timothy, Captain Burford, Mr. Michelson, will you come?'

Mr. Michelson was talking to Tiny, but he assented. Tiny said she would stay with Charles, and Uncle Timothy declared himself afraid, but the rest prepared to go.

Soon after they had left the house, the two young men came in.

'Where is Jessie?' asked Pynsent.

'Gone down to the moor,' replied Charles, 'with the rest.'

'What in the world do they do there again to-day? They had *éclat* enough yesterday.'

'Captain Michelson asked them to go, and Anna seemed to wish it,' said Uncle Timothy; 'but Jessie was decidedly averse.'

'We had better go after them,' said Nelson; 'perhaps Chatham may have out the chair, and in his harum-scarum way do mischief.'

'I must go home,' said Pynsent. 'Tell Jessie that I shall be here with the car at three. Tiny must not walk so far; and I think that scapegrace Anna would be much better if she kept quiet.'

Pynsent went to fetch the car, and Nelson to see after his guests. The latter muttered to himself something to the effect that 'women were all full of vanity and folly, and that Annabella Burton was the vainest and silliest of her sex; that they were all pleasure-seekers, and sacrificed every feeling of propriety for mere temporary gratification.' And all this because poor Anna liked the innocent amusement of walking and gliding about on the ice! Men are always so hard upon the follies of women, and so lenient to their own. 'She was literally limping,' pursued Nelson to himself, 'this very morning; and just because a handsome young man was in the way, she must needs expose herself to a second sprain. Indeed, I think it might do her good to have one. How different she is from Jessie!'—here Nelson heaved a sigh; —'and yet, do what one will, one cannot help paying her more

attention and thinking more of her than of her sister. It is a shame that one of her coquettish glances should have more power than the pure, truthful looks of that high-minded, true-hearted Jessie. But what have I to do with either of them? Why should I take such a vast interest as to whether Anna is falling in love with Chatham Michelson, and he with her,—I who have vowed myself to my profession, to duty and to glory? Heigh-ho! I will just go and see Colonel Manwaring, and stay till the little flirt has gone back to her school.'

These reflections were broken in upon by seeing Anna in close conversation with Lady Mansford, to whom, at that lady's request, Mr. Michelson had introduced her and her sister. Chatham was talking to Miss Colville, and seemed just as devoted to her as he had been to Anna. Indeed, he had the power of making himself agreeable to most people, from an unaffected frankness of manner that nature had given him, and that always finds its way to the heart. Kind, courteous, and gentlemanlike, Chatham pleased where many a more shining and talented man would have failed. Nelson, for instance, had five hundred times more of character than he had, and really a much better temper, with perhaps more of genuinely refined feeling, but he sank into insignificance beside his more brilliant friend. Chatham possessed some of his father's faults, with much of the amiability of his mother. He was hot-headed and passionate, but generous and forgiving. He had a good share of talent, but neglected its cultivation in his pursuit of the less worthy acquirements of mere agreeability and the art of pleasing. He was selfish, too, and although he would not have done a dishonourable action for the world, he had not the stern principle within him which could make him sacrifice personal ease, pleasure, or amusement, to a simple sense of duty. He and his father were continually at variance on account of his extravagant habits, which unfortunately were in the main too like Mr. Michelson's own extravagant habits, but uncounteracted by little meannesses. The more you knew of Chatham, the more you liked him, but the less you esteemed him; whereas the more you knew of Nelson, the more you must of necessity esteem him, whether you liked him or not.

'May I ask who that young lady is?' inquired Lady Mansford of Anna, pointing to Louisa.

'Miss Colville, a schoolfellow of mine.'

'Dear me! is she any relation of the Indian Colvilles?'

'She is a daughter of Colonel Colville, who is in India.'

'Then I knew her aunt years ago: will you introduce me?'

Anna heralded Lady Mansford across, and introduced her to

Louisa. Aunt Betsey stood near, and Lady Mansford suddenly recollected that she had known her also years ago, but that she had neglected her under change of circumstances. She was about to speak, when Aunt Betsey, with a very slight and dignified curtsey, walked away. Anna felt disgusted, as she longed to be intimate with that charming Lady Mansford.

A thick haze was gathering on all sides. The sun looked through it sulkily, and withdrew all his bright glances from the ice, as if he thought he had courted it long enough without meeting any answering warmth. The fog was more successful, for he drew forth a slight moisture in return for his pressing overtures. The faces of the ladies were beginning to look blue, and even Anna felt chilled. With one consent they all resolved to leave the moor, and general was the regret that the frost was breaking up.

'I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you at my house, Miss Colville,' said Lady Mansford.

'Thank you,' replied Louisa; 'but my stay in the country will be short, and I am dependent on my friends.'

'I will send for you, and send you back, and shall be delighted if the Miss Burtons would accompany you,' said Lady Mansford.

'It is scarcely safe to remain here longer,' interrupted Mr. Michelson; 'they say the ice is giving way.'

'I will write to you, Miss Colville,' said Lady Mansford; 'good-bye.' And the party separated as quickly as they could, Mr. Michelson attending Lady Mansford and the heiress, his son accompanying the Burtons.

It was so dangerously slippery that the gentlemen were compelled to assist the ladies. Chatham and Anna were arm-in-arm immediately, and Nelson and Miss Colville. Jessie had as much as she could do to keep Captain Burford and Aunt Betsey on their legs.

The first couple went on merrily enough, in spite of Anna's slight lameness and the treacherous ice.

'And how do you mean to kill this long evening?' asked Chatham. 'Winter in the country is dreadful without a houseful of people; but then you are a houseful, to be sure, and a merry one.'

'We are going to the Grange as soon as we get home,' said Anna.

'How I wish I was going too!' sighed Chatham.

'I am sure my uncle would be very glad to see you,' returned Anna, 'and it is not very far from the Hall.'

'I promised to call on him about the election, by the by; how thoughtless of me to have forgotten! I will do so on my way home. What time do you think you shall be there?'

'About four or five at the latest.'

CHAPTER XII.

'Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful jollity,
Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks and wreathèd smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.'—MILTON.

I SUPPOSE it is needless to say that when the party from Fairfield reached the Grange in their covered car, they found Captain Michelson there, talking politics with Farmer Barnard, and looking anxiously out of the window in expectation of the arrival. It must not be imagined that all our friends went in the said car. Though a roomy and convenient vehicle, it would not hold the united forces of Burtons and Burfords. Captain Burford had hired a fly for himself and Charles, in which Tiny and Aunt Betsey also went. Uncle Timothy had made such a point of Aunt Betsey's being of the party, that for the first time in her life she condescended to become Mr. Barnard's guest, and the flutter of feelings in the breast of that worthy man was quite overpowering.

'Don't go, Mr. Chatham,' said Farmer Barnard, —'I beg your pardon, Captain Michelson. If you can put up with rough fare and a farmhouse, and enjoy country games, we shall all be glad of your company.'

'Oh, thank you!' replied Chatham, feeling guilty as Anna looked at him, 'I shall be delighted.'

'You must have tea for lunch, and supper for dinner,' said the farmer.

It would be impossible to describe all the fun and laughter of that evening at the Grange. Even Aunt Betsey relaxed somewhat from her stiffness, and smiled when the fat farmer actually bent his knee before her in redeeming a forfeit, and thus tacitly confessed that she was the lady of all others that he admired the most. Who could tell all the flirtations, palpitations, and associations of those Christmas games and their attendant forfeits?—how old-fashioned mirth and antiquated jests played at hide-and-seek with propriety; how men and women forgot the punctilios of society, and romped like children; and how all were more inclined to love and friendship at the end than at the beginning of the evening. There is Farmer Barnard, a great living joke, cracking his sides with laughter at the two

little Skinners, who have been asked to meet Tiny, and who are initiating her into the mysteries of 'Truckle the Trencher.'

'You are Lily of the Valley,' says one; 'and when somebody twirls the trencher and says "Lily of the Valley!" you must run and pick it up, and then truckle, and call another flower; and if you do not catch it before it is flat on the ground, you will have a forfeit.'

'Now all say your names,' says Jessie, standing in the middle of the room, holding a wooden trencher in her hands.

'Magnolia,' cries Aunt Betsey, ambitious even in her amusements.

'What?' asks Tiny gently of little Skinner.

'Mag-no-liar,' is the reply; 'a great fine flower.'

'Poppy,' screams Farmer Barnard.

'Rose,' says Anna.

'Very appropriate,' whispers Captain Michelson, who is seated by her side, and is overheard by Nelson, standing near.

'Myrtle,' calls Chatham, and adds quietly, 'The rose wants the myrtle to make it perfect;' and Anna blushes, whilst Chatham gazes on her admiringly.

'I will have a wild flower,' says Louisa Colville, 'Forget-me-not.'

'So will I,' exclaims Pynsent, answering that gentle, blue-eyed, loveable Forget-me-not,—'Water-lily.'

'Water-lilies ought to shelter Forget-me-nots,' says Captain Burford maliciously.

'Camomile-flowers,' exclaims Uncle Timothy dryly, and causes a great laugh.

'Lily of the Valley,' says Tiny.

'Fuchsia and Geranium,' the two little Skinners.

'Coxcomb,' cries Captain Burford.

'Very inappropriate,' says Jessie. 'And now, Nelson, it is your turn.'

'I don't know any more flowers,' he answers carelessly.

'Cowslip—be Cowslip,' suggests Jessie. 'Do you remember the huge tisty-tosties we used to make long ago?'

'Cowslip be it, little Violet,' said Nelson, recollections of boyhood and cowslip-gathering with Jessie rushing through his mind. 'And you?'

'You have named me Violet; and now we will begin the game. Remember, first, that when any one calls "Flowers!" everybody must change places, or forfeit.'

The servants are seen peeping in at the door, and Jessie begs them to come in, and sit down by the door, and see the fun.

Jessie truckles the trencher capitally, and calls 'Coxcomb!'

Up jumps Coxcomb, and, just catching it in time, twirls, and shouts 'Lily of the Valley!'

Lily calls 'Poppy!' and that luckless flower slips, and, slipping, knocks down the trencher.

'A forfeit! a forfeit!' and Poppy pulls forth a large clasp-knife, twirls, and shouts 'Magnolia!'

Magnolia glides across the room, takes the trencher between her finger and thumb daintily, truckles, and cries 'Flowers!' gliding herself into a vacant seat, and putting all the people in motion.

Strange that Chatham finds himself again by Anna in their new seats, and Nelson is the forfeited one, without a seat, in the middle of the room.

'Rose!' he cries.

Rose darts across like a star, and summons 'Myrtle.' Myrtle calls 'Violet;' Violet invokes 'Camomile-flowers,' who fairly falls down amid roars of laughter; Camomile-flowers calls 'Forget-me-not,' who wishes to call 'Water-lily,' but changes, and says 'Flowers!'

And so goes on the game, young and old playing with equal enjoyment. The forfeits are given into the care of Charles, who looks on in his arm-chair by the fire.

'Here is a thing, and a very pretty thing, what shall the lady do to redeem it again?' he asks Nelson, who is kneeling at his feet.

'Kneel to the handsomest, bow to the wittiest, and shake hands with the one she loves best.'

'Anna's forfeit,' says Charles.

'It used to be, "kiss the one she loves best," in my younger days,' exclaims Farmer Barnard.

'The rising generation are too fine for that,' says Captain Burford; 'I don't suppose they ever heard of kissing.'

Anna kneels gracefully to Captain Michelson, bows to Nelson, and pauses, with her finger on her mouth, to consider. The two young men feel nervous.

'No relations, Miss Anna,' says Captain Burford; 'they are not allowed in forfeits, for everybody knows that one loves one's relations.'

'Very well,' cries Anna, running behind the Captain and imprinting a kiss upon his cheek. 'Now never say again that the rising generation do not know what kissing means.'

'You monkey! I don't believe you,' says Captain Burford.

'Here's a thing, and a very pretty thing, what shall the gentleman do to redeem it again?'

Anna peeps, and sees Captain Burford's gold snuff-box.

'Dance the sailor's hornpipe,' she says.

'Come, Coxcomb,' exclaims Charles, holding up the box.

'I'll pay you off, you gipsy! but you shall not get my snuff-box,' says the Captain, and sets to work with all his heart, and dances a regular sailor's jig, which Jessie hums for him.

'Bravo! bravo!' cry the whole party, as he falls panting at Charles's feet, to cry the next forfeit.

'Spell "Opportunity" in the corner with Mr. Barnard of the Grange,' he says.

'Aunt Betsey!' exclaims Charles, smothering a laugh.

Aunt Betsey declines the forfeit with dignity; but Farmer Barnard, forgetful of his usual shyness, rises, and insists on conducting her to the corner. She gives her hand, and they walk slowly thither.

'You are not of the rising generation, remember, Barnard,' says the Captain.

Barnard does remember, and, as Aunt Betsey deliberately spells 'Opportunity,' meditates the insult of a salute; but his courage fails him as he gazes on her frigid demeanour, and he can only lead her to her seat again.

'I should not have believed that of *you*,' says Captain Burford.

Various were the forfeits cried. Tiny had to kiss Captain Michelson, which she was a long time resolving to do; Chatham to dance a reel with the two prettiest young ladies in the room, which he performed with Anna and Louisa Colville; Jessie to sing a song; Pynsent to make himself agreeable to the ladies,—which he did by paying them the most outrageous compliments; and Nelson to repeat a portion of Shakespeare to some young lady present. He performed his part charmingly by addressing the two sisters in the beautiful passage from the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' that begins,—

'We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,' etc.

'Upon my word, Nelson, you must have been on the Indian stage,' said Captain Burford, looking proudly on his son, and feeling pleased at his joining Jessie with her lovelier sister in his address.

And so the evening sped. The game was changed, and various others succeeded,—quiet ones, that Charles could join in. They had, 'What's my thought like?' and 'How, when, and where?' and 'Cross questions and crooked answers,' and last of all, 'I love my love,' which caused much mirth. Pynsent, who was undeniably the quiet wag of the party, managed so that Farmer Barnard should have the letter 'B,' and he began, 'I love my

love with a B, because she is beautiful; I hate her because she is bilious; I took her to the sign of the Bear, and treated her to blackberries; the ugliest part about her is her bonnet, the prettiest her—her—beauty; her name is'—here he paused. 'Betsey,' whispered Pynsent; 'Burton,' murmured Captain Burford; and between the two the good farmer was quite abashed. 'Her name is Betsey,' at last he said, 'and she lives at'—'Bairfield,' muttered Captain Burford—'Barnstaple,' boldly said Mr. Barnard.

Just before supper came Mr. Skinner, an unheard-of honour, and one that might well have been dispensed with, not only by his acquaintances, but by his children, who looked blank at the apparition.

'What do you think of Jessie's intended?' asked Pynsent of Louisa Colville.

'Horrid!' was the reply.

Jessie was busy seeing about supper, which was laid in the large hall, and consisted of every variety of Christmas fare. When they sat down to it, Mr. Skinner did actually manage to get next to her. It was very odd that she never sat beside any one she cared for. Again Aunt Betsey was voted to the head of the table, and she had never been so agreeable before. Of course Anna was between the two soldier beaux, dividing her favours, like a little coquette as she was.

After supper they had songs. Jessie and Charles sang duets beautifully, and they were called upon to begin the concert. They sang the fine duet from the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, 'I know a bank,' and everybody was delighted. Then, according to custom, Jessie called for a song, and she named 'Captain Michelson.' He had a fine voice, and sang 'Drink to me only with thine eyes,' which elicited much applause. He called on Anna, but she could not sing without an accompaniment; neither could Miss Colville. Aunt Betsey was his next attempt, and, after much pressing, and to the great prejudice of Farmer Barnard's peace of mind, she sang a song that he used to hear her sing when in the zenith of her charms and cruelty. It was called 'The Friend and the Lover,' and in very sensible language declared that the lady was waiting until she could find a true, kind, clever, and courteous mate. The refrain of each verse was,—

> 'Nor e'er will I marry, till the one I can find
> Where the friend and the lover are equally joined.'

Farmer Barnard chimed in loudly in this chorus, and highly approved the sentiment.

Then followed a wonderful Christmas carol, drawled out, in character, and as a duet, by Farmer Barnard and Pynsent, which made everybody present die of laughing, and afterwards, 'Cease, loud Boreas, blustering railer,' by the Captain.

Nelson was no great singer, but he used, in his boyhood, to sing with Jessie, so he was loudly called upon for one of the old ditties, and he and Jessie, who sat opposite him, and had been rather pained by his lack of attention during supper, sang together.

This did Nelson good. Much of disquiet and jealousy had been rankling in his mind all that evening. Jessie's sweet voice, joining with his own, seemed to enter gently into his heart and calm it; and when he glanced across at her, and saw the modest, blushing face, the affections of his deep, true heart swelled up as of old, and again flowed over the hard stones and pebbles that had been laid bare at its bottom. He inwardly said that if, in the whole world, there was one human being true, pure, and good, it was Jessie. Her voice faltered a little once or twice, and he fancied that he saw something like moisture pressing through the soft eyelashes. When she looked up, and met his glance, and blushed and smiled, he was quite convinced there was a tear in her eye, and he asked himself whether old associations had forced it there.

When the praises and thanks of the party ceased, Nelson said quietly, 'Jessie, may I have the pleasure of taking wine with you?' and as she, in the words of Chatham's song, 'drank to him only with those eyes,' he thought them the dearest and best he had ever looked into.

It is a pity that good old sociable custom of pledging one another over the wine-glass should be extinct. There was a friendliness in the glance, nod, and smile, that helped to break the ice of a stiff, frigid dinner-party, or to warm into conversation the shy, silent pair who had been sitting side by side and exhausting all their stock of monosyllables before. Better still, it sometimes cemented friendship or awakened love, or made eyes bright that had been dull. Not unfrequently it reconciled divided lovers, by loosening the bands of hard jealousy or unkindness that had fastened round the heart, but which the glance of fellowship rent in twain; or it was the first symptom of reconciliation between friends or acquaintances at variance from slight, silly causes; or it helped to make mere acquaintances friends. On the present occasion it made Jessie glad and gay, and Nelson himself again.

It was a fine, clear, frosty moonlight morning when the party found themselves on their way homewards. The fly

went on swiftly before, and its inmates had not much to say for themselves,—they were so tired and sleepy, but around the car hovered all kinds of emotions. Was there ever a car full of young people of both sexes, returning from a Christmas party, around which or in which various emotions did not dwell? Pynsent was driving, and Anna proposed to Louisa Colville to sit on the driving-seat with him, that they might look at the 'beautiful, exquisite moon.' Louisa consented, and they put Pynsent between them. This arrangement enabled Captain Michelson to ride by Anna's side, and, reining in his good horse, to watch the moonbeams flickering about her. Uncle Timothy was dozing inside, and Nelson sat by Jessie. The latter found herself joining Nelson in the duet, 'Flow on, thou shining river,' which he was humming in the moonlight. Conversation ceased, and all the young people united to make the night musical with song. 'Meet me by moonlight,' 'O no, we never mention her,' 'The Soldier's Tear,' 'Alice Gray,' and many other simple ballads of the period, were sung in chorus, and gentle, pleasant thoughts and feelings were inspired by the strains.

The threatened thaw had not continued, but Frost cast his white garment over the earth. The hedges were hung with icicles that rivalled the diamonds pendent from the ears of an Eastern princess, or the jewels studding her garments. Not a cloud fell on the placid face of the moon, that gazed, like a tender mother, on the sleeping earth, and converted all her night-gear into silver tissue. Each star seemed a spirit, each blade of grass a bright fairy worshipper, each trembling withered leaf a winter firefly. Clearly rang the music through the frosty air; and as Jessie glanced at the sky, and saw those wonderful orbs of eternal light looking down upon them, she thought of the worlds unseen by mortal eye, and of their unknown inhabitants. She sank into a train of pious meditation, that induced her, when asked to begin another song, to choose 'The Happy Land,' with the closing verse of which they reached Fairfield.

CHAPTER XIII.

'Can it be flattery, to swear those eyes
Are Love's eternal lamps he fires all hearts with?
That tongue the smart string to his bow? those sighs
The deadly shafts he sends into our souls?
Ah! look upon me with thy spring of beauty.'

JOHN FLETCHER.

'I AM sure I could make those wreaths best,' said Jessie to Anna and Louisa Colville, who were torturing holly-berries and snow-berries into all kinds of shapes.

'Do try, dear!' said Anna, throwing down a wreath that she had in her hands.

'You had better go and dress the while,' said Jessie, 'or we shall be late, and Captain Burford hates anybody to be a minute behind time.'

Off went Anna, nothing loth, and the wreaths progressed famously under Jessie's neat, tasteful fingers. Tiny stood by, to thread the needles, and pick out pretty bunches from the mass of evergreens that lay upon the table.

'I hope your brother will not see us,' said Louisa. 'He will laugh at our vanity, and I should never have the courage to wear the wreath afterwards.'

'There!' exclaimed Jessie, holding up the red and green chaplet, 'that will become Anna very much. I have mixed a few arbutus berries in it, and they show out famously amongst the green.'

'And what are you going to wear?' asked Louisa Colville.

'Oh, nothing!' laughed Jessie. 'Fancy me, a steady old housekeeper and farmer, sporting wreaths of flowers!'

'Then you shall wear this bunch of laurestinus, just to please me,' said Louisa, holding a spray against her brown hair.

I daresay my lady readers would like to know what these young damsels had on at their first public dance; for Captain Burford was to give a dance that night, and everybody was to be there. Jessie and Anna wore simple white muslin dresses, but Anna's was ornamented with red ribbons, whereas Jessie had no ornaments of any kind. Louisa Colville sported a pale blue net over a smart satin slip, and as she was remarkably fair, it became her well. The snow-berry wreath wound prettily round her braided hair, and the blue eyes and soft pink and white cheeks looked very loveable beneath. Upon Anna's small head and jet-black hair the holly and ivy sat superbly, lighting up

her sparkling beauty, and giving her the air of some proud Diana crowned with flowers.

'Oh, Anna, you look so beautiful!' said Tiny, throwing her arms round her, and gazing with intense admiration on her face.

Anna glanced into the glass, and knew that the child spoke the truth.

'To please me!' said Louisa entreatingly, holding up the laurestinus.

'Well, I shall cut you all out if I do,' said Jessie, sitting down, whilst Louisa inserted the flowers tastefully.

'I would rather stay with Charles,' said Tiny; 'and I am so afraid of spoiling my best white frock.'

'Captain Burford would be annoyed if you were not to go,' said Anna; 'and we will get the frock washed nicely before you go back to London.'

The frock was very plain, and rather old-fashioned.

'Let her wear this pink sash for once,' said Louisa Colville, bringing one of hers from a drawer.

The pink sash was tried, and looked so well that the child was permitted to wear it, and, to complete her smartening, Louisa put a sprig of laurestinus into her sash.

'All ready for conquest?' asked Pynsent, peeping out of his room as they walked down the passage, and then following at a distance.

'You have been quite as long adorning as we have,' said Anna, tossing round her head.

'Adorable beauty!' cried Pynsent, sinking on one knee in the passage, and putting his hand on his heart.

Anna ran back and tried to push him down, but failed.

'Well, Aunt Betsey,' said Pynsent when they reached the parlour, 'you and I shall have more than we can do to chaperon these four young ladies. Indeed, I think I shall have it all to myself, for you look as young as any of them.'

Pynsent had never been a ball-goer, and had rarely before seen young ladies in full dress, therefore Louisa Colville appeared quite a star to him. He condescended to look at her twice,—a compliment he rarely paid to a lady,—and to assure them all that they really were very well; adding aside to Anna, that he had once paused before a shop-window in London to see a very fine collection of lovely dolls, and that they were exactly curled and furbelowed like them.

Nevertheless Pynsent was very proud of his 'dolls,' when, with Miss Colville by his side, he entered Captain Burford's large dining-room, cleared out for dancing. As this party was in honour of Nelson's return from India, everybody was invited,

and the room was already half full of guests. It was soon quite full, and dancing began.

Anna and Louisa Colville were unquestionably the belles of the evening; and when it was understood that the latter was the daughter of a colonel and an heiress, partners multiplied upon her to such an extent that she did not know how to dance with them all. Pynsent was tormented to death for introductions, and, in his amusement and amazement at the *furore* of the beaux, he said the most impossible and improbable things about her.

'What is her name, Burton?' asked one.

'Colville,' replied Pynsent.

'Who is she?' inquired a third.

'One of the great Colvilles of Castle Colville, in the County Clare; her ancestor was Baron de Colville.'

'Has she much money?' demanded a fourth.

'Enormous wealth, I believe,—not only from her father the colonel, but from no end of uncles and aunts.'

'How much should you say she was worth?' asked a young curate, who, having only a hundred a year and very moderate expectations, was on the look-out for money.

'One never knows those Indian fortunes. I did hear how many millions of lacs of rupees, but I really have forgotten.'

'She is remarkably pretty,' said the young curate. 'Who is that beautiful girl near her?—she is really splendid!'

'It is lucky you said so,' replied Pynsent; 'she is my sister. I thought you had met her before.'

'Ah, yes! some time ago. Will you do me the favour to introduce me?'

'To which?' asked Pynsent.

'Oh! to Miss—the heiress, if you please.'

Miss the heiress was engaged, and the curate retired disappointed, to seek out the next wealthiest young lady in the room. In the course of the evening, however, he managed to dance with Miss Colville, fell violently in love with her, and almost proposed for her. Louisa was astonished and flattered by her vast 'success,' but little knew how much of it she owed to Pynsent's account of her wealth. Of course Anna's admirers were of the more disinterested class, as everybody knew she had no money, but then they were literally worshippers. She had the power of fixing by her beauty, and of then putting the *coup de grâce* by the most fascinating, tantalizing manners. Captain Michelson seemed to have no eyes but for her. True, he danced with others; admired Louisa Colville, said she was thoroughly well-dressed—the best dressed girl in the room;

still Anna was the magnet. Nelson, too,—the grave, yet changeable Nelson,—was almost as much devoted; and whilst, as in duty bound, making himself agreeable to all the guests in turn, he found himself looking at her, thinking of her, and talking to her continually.

'And are you really going to my aunt's, to bury yourself in Wales?' asked Chatham, in one of the pauses of the dance.

'I suppose so, if she likes,' replied Anna, colouring; 'I have not heard yet.'

'But do you like it?'

'Of course I do not,—I hate it; but it is better than Miss Primmerton's.'

'But why need you do either?'

'I believe I have no choice. But pray do not talk of such odious things now; I want to forget it, until I am obliged to remember it. Let me be an independent Burton as long as I can.'

The proud girl drew herself up and glanced round as she said this, as if the Burtons were, and always had been, the first people in the world.

Chatham admired the pride, and inwardly declared that she should never have that fine spirit, as he called it, crushed if he could help it.

'Will you give me that piece of myrtle?' he asked, as the quadrille concluded, and Anna picked up a sprig that had fallen from her bosom.

'Of what value could it be to you?' she asked, looking, or pretending to look, astonished.

'I assure you I should prize it beyond anything in the world,' he replied enthusiastically.

'What, if it came from your aunt's future governess?' said Anna carelessly, giving the myrtle as she spoke.

Chatham looked at her reproachfully, but met such a proud, half-contemptuous glance, that he scarcely knew what to make of her.

'If Miss Annabella Burton is to be my aunt's future governess,' said Chatham, 'both my aunt and her nephew will, I am sure, value whatever comes from her.'

'Is she kind, then,—and not overbearing?—and will she treat me like a lady,—and not — not'—said Anna, recovering her natural manner, and speaking hastily.

'As she is a lady, and you are a lady, I do not know what else she could do,' said Chatham.

Anna looked grateful, and, as the dance was over, walked towards Jessie, who was sitting with her Uncle Timothy, anxiously

watching her, and feeling uncomfortable at the earnest and animated conversation that she was carrying on with Captain Michelson. Uncle Timothy had been confiding to her his fears that Anna was too volatile rightly and conscientiously to be made a governess; and Jessie was dreading the temptations that must surround one so evidently and universally an object of admiration. Scarcely was Anna seated by her side, when Pynsent came up, accompanied by Louisa Colville.

'I am requested,' he said, bowing to Anna, 'to beg my beautiful and accomplished second sister to favour the company with a song. Everybody knows that you have learned of Signor Squalini, and we are all anxious to know how he teaches. Miss Colville has kindly consented to assist in a duet, and we are all on the very points of the horns of expectation.'

'How can we sing,' asked Anna, 'when the piano is not in this room?'

'The company will feel themselves honoured by going into the drawing-room,' answered Pynsent, 'where I have caused to be placed the little secret roll of music that I found in the car, and thus have stopped up all avenues of escape.'

'Pynsent, you are too provoking,' said Anna.

'Don't say so, now; because if you had not meant to sing, you would not have brought your music,' replied Pynsent.

'We are going to have some music,' here broke in Nelson; 'will you all come into the drawing-room? Miss Colville, I hope you will be so kind as to sing,—and you, Miss Annabella.'

They all followed Nelson into the drawing-room, where there was a somewhat antiquated piano, that had belonged to his mother. They sang an Italian duet, Anna taking the first. They had been well taught, and had good voices,—Anna's was, indeed, very good, and her singing sufficiently finished for a young lady of eighteen. As she was not nervous, she created quite a sensation, whilst poor Louisa, who was fairly frightened to death, broke down. Captain Michelson came to the rescue, and, taking up the second,—the duet was the 'Deh con te' of Norma,—he and Anna finished it triumphantly together. Mr. Michelson came into the room at the conclusion, and, with the air of a connoisseur, applauded. He was passionately fond of Italian music, and sang well himself. Turning over some other duets that lay on the piano, he asked Anna to sing one with him. She did so, and sang it well. As not many of the young people cared much about Italian singing, most of them gradually dropped off to the dancing-room, and left few behind, except our friends the Burton and Michelson set; we include Nelson therein. Louisa Colville played the accompaniments, and Anna sang,

now alone, and now with Mr. Michelson or Chatham, all the songs she had brought with her. Mr. Michelson was delighted; —so was his son,—so was Nelson, though in reality he preferred Jessie's voice and style of singing to Anna's. Then Chatham sat down at the piano, and struck a few chords. His father begged him to sing. He sang the beautiful little ballad, 'Annie Laurie,' so well, and with such feeling, that Anna Burton felt her cheek flush every time that he came to the concluding line,—

'And for bonnie Annie Laurie
I'd lay me doun and dee.'

'That must be meant for Anna,' whispered Tiny to Jessie, 'only her eyes are black instead of blue.'

Mr. Michelson overheard the words.

'Do you like music?' he said, seating himself by her side, and taking her little hand in his.

'Yes, very much,' she replied.

'And which song did you like best?'

'The one you sang with Anna.'

'Do you think you should like me, if you knew me?' asked Mr. Michelson, with a strange feeling of anxiety at his heart.

Tiny hung her head.

'Answer, dear,' said Jessie; 'you need not be afraid if you tell the truth.'

'I think I should,' said Tiny timidly; and Mr. Michelson felt real pleasure at the reply.

Whilst Mr. Michelson was talking to Tiny, Jessie glanced across at the piano, and saw a bit of by-play going on which pained her in more ways than one. Anna was bending her head over a piece of music that she held in her hand, and blushing through the curls that partly shaded her face, as they fell on the music. Chatham, who had finished his song, but was still seated at the piano, was looking up in her face and whispering,

'Yes, the words *were* intended for Anna Burton, though her eyes are black and not blue.'

On the opposite side of the piano Nelson was leaning on his elbow, and gazing, partly concealed by the music which intervened, on Anna. As if he heard the words, as he saw the blush, a dark shadow fell on his face, and his brows contracted as if he were in pain. Jessie knew well, by the stern expression of the mouth, that he was displeased, and suddenly her own cheek grew pale, and her poor heart felt a pang. Nelson hastily left the room, and in a few minutes afterwards Chatham and Anna followed arm in arm, engaged for the next waltz. Mr. Michelson's quick eye caught the pair, and he too went to the

dancing-room. Pynsent brought a partner for Louisa Colville; and soon the only inmates of the drawing-room were Jessie and Tiny. The former sat down on an easy-chair by the fire, and Tiny on a stool at her feet.

Poor Jessie! This is the first harsh awakening from her life-long dream. True, she may fall back again into the same dream, but never will it be so untroubled and happy as it has hitherto been. To have lived her childhood and early girlhood with Nelson had helped to make those portions of her life pass gently, in spite of the sorrows that obscured it. To have wandered with him in thought through the cities, mountains, and plains of India, had been her dearest pleasure for the last eight years; and to dwell with him for ever at some future time—to share his hopes and fears, his joys and sorrows, to be his trusting, helping friend and comforter—was, she scarcely knew why, the desire of her soul, and had been so ever since she could remember to have formed a wish. But were his thoughts, hopes, and wishes like hers? She did not know. She began to fear not. Oh! Captain Burford, why did you plant in her mind, from infancy, fancies that might never be realized? Why sow seeds of love and hope that never were to blossom?

Captain Burford came to answer for himself. He had missed his dear Jessie, and was searching for her.

'What are you about, Jessie?' he asked, coming suddenly upon her in the midst of a long, deep reverie, during which Tiny had absolutely fallen asleep, with her head upon her lap. 'What business have you to creep away by yourself here? I expected you to do the honours, as if you were my daughter, which, you know, you are to be; and here'—

'Oh, do not say that, if you please, dear Captain Burford!' said Jessie, feeling much inclined to burst into tears; 'I should be so much obliged if you would not say that again. You must not,—indeed you must not.'

'The dickens is in the young people, I think,' said the Captain, violently stirring the fire, and arousing Tiny by so doing. 'Here's Nelson, with his face as long as my arm, seriously advising me not to say those kind of things; and now you come, like a tragedy queen, and "if you please" me, and "dear" me, and beg me not to do the very thing I like best, and to talk about what has been settled four-and-twenty years! I tell you what it is, miss, I will talk about it if I like, and have it done, in spite of'—

'Hush, if you please! do—do not;—here is Nelson,' interrupted Jessie, with a voice of alarm.

'The deuce take Nelson and all such fools!' said the Captain heartily.

Nelson evidently heard his father's affectionate consignment of him to that enigma 'the deuce,' for he looked confused; still he fulfilled his purpose.

'Will you dance the last country dance with me, Jessie?' he said; 'we have not danced together to-night.'

'More shame for you to say so, under the circumstances,' said the Captain angrily.

Jessie hastily put her arm into Nelson's and walked away.

'Come, little one, you must dance with me,' said the good-natured Captain, bearing off Tiny.

Jessie found the dance formed: Anna was dancing with Mr. Michelson, to the chagrin of Chatham and Aunt Betsey, who by some strange chance had fallen together. Pynsent and Louisa Colville looked the merriest of our friends, as they stood *vis-à-vis*; but as for Nelson and Jessie, they had not a word to say to one another. They were no longer the happy, blushing, innocent children, affianced like a second Paul and Virginia, but the young man and woman, modelled by the world, and changed by the magic wand of passion and shame; and one short week had sufficed to effect all this.

Dances, and all the cross purposes they invariably bring about, must, like everything else, have an end. Captain Burford's had been a very merry one, and many a flushed face was laid upon the pillow that night that would gladly have flushed on a similar party on the morrow.

The following morning came a note to Miss Colville from Lady Mansford, inviting her to pay her a visit at Mansford Park, and begging her to convey an invitation to the Miss Burtons to accompany her. She proposed sending her carriage for them the following week, and hoped nothing would prevent their accepting her invitation, as she was very anxious to make their acquaintance.

'I would rather not go,' said Louisa Colville.

'Oh, I should like it of all things!' exclaimed Anna.

'You, my dear!' said Aunt Betsey; 'what, visit a person who has almost cut your whole family for years?'

'Oh, that is over and gone, aunty. Besides, she has been so kind in writing to Lady Georgiana Meredith about me, that I am sure we ought not to think of old times.'

'That is all her pride; she is very glad to patronize us Burtons.'

'Oh, I am sure Lady Mansford is not proud.'

'Well,' interposed Pynsent, 'save me from visiting people who think themselves above me, and that they are conferring a great favour by inviting me. I would rather go and spend a

week with our old Lizzie Durman; I should feel at home there. What do you say, Jessie?'

'That there is at least as much pride in your view of the matter as in Lady Mansford's, supposing her to be a proud woman, which seems doubtful.'

'And are you going to accept her invitation?' asked Pynsent, with a look of horror.

'Certainly not,' said Jessie, 'but I hope Louisa will: it would be very pleasant for her to become acquainted with some of her mamma's friends before she goes to India.'

'I would rather not go, and would not go alone for the world,' said Louisa.

'I will go with you,' exclaimed Anna; 'I should like it so much. Aunty, don't look cross; I am sure you will be glad for me to amuse myself as long as I can!' and she threw her arms coaxingly about Aunt Betsey's neck, who was always gained over by her niece's entreaties.

'I always thought you the proudest girl in the world until now,' said Pynsent. 'How are the mighty fallen!'

'Uncle Timothy,' exclaimed Anna, slipping round to her uncle, who was reading the newspaper by the fire, and putting her face between the paper and his face, 'do you think there is any want of pride in my going to visit Lady Mansford?'

'Really, my dear, I do not understand those things. Please yourself, and, provided you do nothing wrong, you will please me. What does Niece Jessie think?'

'It is so much a matter of taste, uncle,' said Jessie. 'I should not like to go myself; but, as Louisa does not like going alone, and Anna wishes it'—

'Just so, my dear; you are always right. If Miss Colville goes, I think Anna should go. Lady Mansford has been kind in interesting herself about Anna, and she must not show any incivility in return.'

Anna gave her uncle a kiss, and looked triumphantly at Pynsent, then said, turning to Louisa,—

'It rests with you, Louisa; and the messenger waits for an answer. Will you come up-stairs, and we will concoct one?'

'Do you really think I ought to go, Jessie?' asked Louisa; it will be a great bore.'

'Perhaps your mamma might wish it, as you are so near Lady Mansford; it would seem unnatural to refuse.'

'What am I to say for you?'

'That I am very much obliged, but too much engaged to accept her invitation.'

The two friends left the room.

'Anna will be ruined,' said Pynsent, 'by all the admiration and flattery she is sure to get. Depend upon it, every ball and party she goes to will unfit her more and more for the situation she will fill.'

'But, my dear nephew, she is so young,' said Uncle Timothy deprecatingly.

'If she is old enough to be a governess, she is old enough to act prudently,' returned Pynsent, and left the room.

'There is a great deal of common sense in what Pynsent remarked,' said Uncle Timothy; 'he is really wonderfully clever and discriminating for such a youth; and as to his profession, I would trust him in cases where I would not trust many an older practitioner.'

'He would not like to hear you call him a youth,' said Jessie, laughing; 'he is nearly three-and-twenty.'

'He is very steady and good. I had a long conversation with him yesterday upon his future prospects, and although I offered him a share in my practice, as my assistant, he determined to remain in the country on your account.'

'He is the best and kindest brother in the world; but I know how much he longs to live in London, so I hope he will not refuse your kind offer.'

'He seems quite to have made up his mind, and such a sacrifice is likely to be of more moral service to him than all the reputation he might gain in London in the next fifty years. Besides, there is a good opening here; and he says he can help you about the farm at the same time. Charles has quite made up his mind to exert himself to get well, and to come to me immediately.'

'My dear uncle,' said Charles, who was much better since he had begun to strive against his weakness, 'it is really too much to impose upon your kindness and generosity.'

'Not mine, Nephew Charles. You know Brother James has determined that you shall not be a farmer, because he declares that you would be his ruin as well as your own; so he means to pay for your apprenticeship to the arts, and you are only to live with me. Mr. Michelson told him that, when you had studied in England, he would put you in the way of getting to Italy.'

'I ought to be thankful to the fever for bringing about my wishes: "out of evil springeth good."'

'I trust it may prove good, my dear boy. There is no doubt that whatever happens to those who earnestly strive to do their duty, and who trust to the Almighty for guidance, is ordered by Him for their eventual good. The most cloudy sky has the sun somewhere, and the rainbow springs out of unpromising moisture.'

'Uncle Timothy guilty of similes,' cried Anna, entering the room with a note in her hand. 'I always thought you had a poetical turn. Here is the note, signed and sealed. I am so glad Pynsent is gone, he is so cross.'

'And have you quite decided upon going?' asked Jessie.

'Yes, quite. Louisa thinks, with you, that she ought to go, and I shall so like to know that charming Lady Mansford. I hope you do not disapprove of it, Jessie?'

'I think it will be removing you out of your proper sphere.'

'One would think we were born beggars, or tradespeople at best. I should like to know in what the Mansfords are better than we are?'

'In all that the world generally calls better,—in fortune, rank, position, and education.'

'Not the last, however, thanks to Uncle Timothy; and I am sure our family is as good as theirs.'

'I should think so,' interposed Aunt Betsey, drawing herself up. 'I remember the time when my grandfather and Sir Thomas Mansford's grandfather were like brothers. But nobody thinks of anything but money now-a-days.'

'"Riches make to themselves wings and flee away,"' said Uncle Timothy; 'and as to family, we are all children of one common Parent. Our position is that in which God has placed us, and superiority in it is a mere matter of opinion. In reality, he who does his duty best holds the highest rank.'

'Oh, my dear sir!' exclaimed Aunt Betsey, 'you must admit there are great differences.'

'Indeed I do, madam. I see half the world striving after things that are of no value, and pluming themselves upon what they must shortly leave behind them; and the greater portion of the other half living in idleness and folly; the smallest part, I am sorry to say, is that made up of rational human beings, who are content "to do their duty in that state of life in which Providence has placed them."'

'How well you remember your Catechism, uncle!' said Anna.

'I am glad to hear it, my dear; I hope you will remember it also, and do what it tells you.'

'You are all so prosy this morning,' said Anna. 'Oh! don't sigh and shake your head, darling Jessie; I know what it means. I will be very good and steady by and by, you shall see.'

CHAPTER XIV.

'There is no life on earth, but being in love;
There are no studies, no delights, no business,
No intercourse, or trade of sense, or soul,
But what is love! I was the laziest creature,
The most unprofitable sign of nothing,
The veriest drone, and slept away my life
Beyond the dormouse, till I was in love.'

BEN JONSON.

TO the great sorrow of everybody, Uncle Timothy was obliged to leave on Friday. He consented to Tiny's remaining at Fairfield as long as Miss Colville did, as she was already looking all the better for her visit. She was a shy little dove, but she nestled warmly in Jessie's gentle bosom, and began to love her and Charles very much indeed. Uncle Timothy told Jessie that when he was quite superannuated he meant to come and end his days with her at Fairfield. 'When all the rest are married, my dear, and you are in want of a companion,' he said. Even Uncle Timothy fell into the general notion that Jessie would never marry, although she was a most comely maiden, and, as he well knew, would make the best wife in the world. But he could not imagine Fairfield without Jessie. Captain Burford alone remained firm in his resolution, that she should marry his Nelson, whether she would or no: after four-and-twenty years of expectation, he was not going to be disappointed.

Uncle Timothy took his departure, and the two young ladies went to Lady Mansford's, leaving Tiny, in addition to the family party, at home. She and Jessie went about together, feeding poultry, and doing all kinds of useful matters, which delighted her greatly, whilst Aunt Betsey knitted, and Pynsent and Charles pursued their avocations. The former took a surgery in the town, and set about furnishing it with medicines, bottles, and pill-boxes. His friend and former master was thinking of shortly retiring from the profession, and promised to make Pynsent his successor; meanwhile he was to struggle for himself. He intended residing, or rather sleeping, at Fairfield, and practising in the town.

Lady Mansford received her young guests very kindly. Anna was enchanted with her, and Louisa liked her very well. Sir Thomas was a tall, stiff, aristocratic man, with manners as unbending as his person, whilst his wife was the most voluble and agreeable of women. She suited him very well, because he disliked talking, and she had not the least objection to doing double duty.

As Mr. Michelson was a neighbour of the Mansfords, they were on very intimate terms, and Chatham had the *entrée* of Mansford Park whenever he liked. The sly-boots Anna knew that well, or the pride of which Pynsent spoke so warmly would undoubtedly have prevented her from visiting Lady Mansford. Both Mr. Michelson and his son dined at the Park almost daily, and, indeed, passed a portion of most mornings there, during the visit of our young damsels. Miss Erskine was also there, and very evidently not averse to the handsome Chatham Michelson, intended for her husband by her friend Lady Mansford and his father. There was a great deal of fun and gaiety going on in an electioneering way, as Sir Thomas Mansford was one of Mr. Michelson's stanchest supporters; and political subjects brought together a great many agreeable gentlemen, young and old, who were pleasant additions to the party at Mansford Park.

Amongst these, it is scarcely necessary to say, Anna's beauty and fascination soon became a topic of conversation, and of general admiration. Even Sir Thomas Mansford waxed eloquent in her praise, and grew gallant when she was near. She dispersed her smiles and her musical laughter amongst them as equally and as unaffectedly as the most finished coquette could have done; and if she gave a brighter glance to Chatham, or a more friendly smile to Nelson, when he dined at the Park, nobody but the parties concerned knew anything about it. It was no wonder that Nelson and Chatham had both almost fallen in love with her at first sight, for everybody else did the same. Old and young, married and single—I may almost say, male and female—were captivated by the 'Fairy of Fairfield,' as Mr. Michelson had christened her. A fairy and enchantress, a wild little magician and ogress, she undoubtedly was, and her wand was beauty, her incantations were her charms, her poisons winning, mirthful words. The 'true-blue' rosettes and bows she was making for Mr. Michelson's party were seized upon with ardour by his voters, and called the 'Anna Burtons' by the wearers, who professed to know them at a glance from those made by any other young lady. She had white and red camellias for her hair, and bouquets of all kinds and colours showered upon her, as if she were some successful actress; and a successful actress she certainly was—a perfect Jenny Lind—in the simplicity and grace of her performance: for, whether the effect of pure nature or consummate art, everybody acknowledged that her want of affectation was her greatest charm. Her movements, her conversation, her very pride, were all spontaneous and unstudied. Had she had more self-control, more restraint of manner, she would have been happier and better, but not

one tithe so much admired. Her very faults found favour under cover of her perfections.

To have gained so much of admiration, Anna Burton must have outstayed her intended time at Mansford Park, it will be imagined. She did so. From day to day excuses were made to detain her and Louisa, and, rather to the dislike of the latter, were accepted. Anna ruled Louisa entirely, and had but to express a wish to have it gratified.

During this period letters were passing between Lady Mansford and Lady Georgiana Meredith concerning Anna. Lady Georgiana had written to Miss Primmerton, and received a faithful catalogue of her several accomplishments and deserts, rather heightened by Miss Primmerton's desire to do her a service. This, together with Lady Mansford's favourable mention of her, induced Lady Georgiana to enter into a correspondence with Anna, which finally ended in her engaging her as governess. Anna liked the tone of Lady Georgiana's letters, because they were written in a lady-like style, and so did Jessie, to whom they were sent. She evidently did not expect to meet with perfection in a governess, or universal accomplishments. Anna wrote in such a humble, simple manner, that Lady Georgiana expressed herself much pleased with her letter, and engaged her at a salary of eighty guineas a year, to be increased, if she remained any length of time with them, to a hundred.

Everybody thought that Lady Georgiana was very liberal; and so, according to general practice and opinion, she was. But she was a gentlewoman and very well off, and she knew that to ensure a good education for her children, she must pay for it, therefore she did not even think of offering less. Moreover, she said to herself, 'The labourer is worthy of his hire;' and it must be pleasanter to wear away young life and health and feelings in the arduous task of tuition, when liberally remunerated and kindly treated, than when grudgingly paid some twenty or thirty pounds a year, and condemned to solitude and incivility therewith.

I am sorry to say that, instead of examining her mind, testing her acquirements, and subduing her pride, with a view to filling an important but subordinate position in life, Anna passed the short interval of holiday that remained to her in fostering an attachment, that had begun in vanity, for Chatham Michelson. As she never did anything by halves, of course she was oceans deep in love. She did not ask herself whether he were suited to her in rank, fortune, temper, or character,—she only saw in him a handsome, fascinating, accomplished officer, the very man she had determined to marry ever since she was a child. She could

not help knowing that if she liked him, he liked her twenty times as much; so, almost, in accepting Lady Georgiana's offer, she congratulated herself upon the probability of her making that lady's acquaintance in the position of her niece, rather than her governess. Jessie wrote to urge her to come home, that she might prepare her wardrobe for her change of situation, but the spoiled pet returned such florid descriptions of her enjoyment, and such melancholy hints at the change she should soon have to endure, that Jessie could urge it no longer, however much she might feel the want of sisterly affection in Anna's absenting herself from home during those last few weeks.

Everybody was made anxious and unhappy through that unlucky beauty with which nature had endowed Anna; and, to tell the truth, she was not perfectly at ease herself, although she did feel convinced that she was treated like some divinity of another clime by a whole band of admirers. She knew that Jessie was distressed at her not returning, that Pynsent was annoyed at her being where she was, and that Aunt Betsey's pride was irritated on her account; still she could not prevail upon herself to quit the gay scenes she was in, for the dull happiness of Fairfield. Besides, there was to be an election ball, and Mr. Michelson, as its donor, was determined that the two belles should be there, and Lady Mansford was quite as much determined to chaperon them. True, Jessie, by note, set her face against Anna's going; but Jessie not being present to support her note, her influence faded before the united Mansford and Michelson interest, backed by that of a score of beaux.

The ball-dress was the greatest difficulty. Anna had no money, and she did not like to name the subject to Jessie, because she knew that she could not afford her one, however simple. Uncle Timothy had told her to write to him before she left home for any additions to her wardrobe; or rather, to write to her dressmaker, Madlle. Fourbillon, for such clothes as she could procure better from her than in the country. Should she write for the simplest of ball-dresses, instead of anything else? It would not be quite what Uncle Timothy meant, but he would not mind it. She would write to him by the same post, and explain how matters stood.

She did so. In reply to her letter to Madlle. Fourbillon came the most simple and elegant of white dresses, looped up with gentianellas, and a wreath of that flower for her hair. In reply to the one she wrote to Uncle Timothy arrived a very gentle reproach, the first she had ever had from him, and therefore very keenly felt. He said that he had not included ball-dresses in his list of clothes necessary for her outfit; neither did he think

that she would find ball-going a good preparation for the life of study and retirement that lay before her. She was right welcome to the dress, but he feared it would be of little real service to her.

When Anna read the note, she resolved, in a moment, to return the dress to its maker, and to write to Uncle Timothy.

'Then he will have to pay the carriage back in addition to the dress,' suggested Louisa; 'for of course Madlle. Fourbillon cannot be expected to take it back, and it will be useless to your uncle.'

Anna was posed.

'I hate the dress now, and the ball, and everything to do with it,' she said. 'I would not have offended Uncle Timothy for the world.'

'But you have promised to go to the ball, and Lady Mansford knows that the dress has come, so what choice have you?' asked Louisa. And accordingly to the ball she went.

Michelson Hall was magnificently lighted up and adorned for the occasion. Guests of almost all ranks were present, promised supporters of Mr. Michelson. Amongst them were the officers of a regiment quartered in a not very distant town, who, together with Chatham and Nelson, were in regimentals. This added greatly to the gaiety of the scene, in the eyes of the young ladies at least, and the question was, 'Who will dance with the officers?' as is usual in such cases; whilst their question was, 'Is there anybody worth dancing with?'

Most of them found Anna well worth dancing with, if one could judge from the succession of military partners she found herself engaged to during the night. Louisa Colville also had her share of red-coats; but she was by nature rather shy and stiff with strangers, so did not get on so well as her more sparkling friend; moreover, she was glancing so frequently at the door, as if she were expecting an arrival, that she was inattentive to the conversation of her partners.

Mr. Michelson complimented Anna on her dress, and expressed himself flattered by her having so tastefully adopted his colour.

'I am disappointed,' he said, 'that none of your family accompanied you to-night. Surely it is time to let bygones be bygones now.'

Anna looked confused. Mr. Michelson led her into a small refreshment room, upon pretence of offering her some lemonade. The room was empty, for dancing was going on. He begged her to sit down, and placed himself beside her.

'Do you think,' he said, 'that old differences could not be patched up between us? I have heard of family quarrels being put an end to by a marriage: what if we could so manage ours?'

Anna's heart beat quick; she thought of Chatham. Could it be? Could Mr. Michelson be about to probe her feelings for his son? She looked eagerly into his face. Oh, the beauty, the fascination of that look! Mr. Michelson felt it, and returned it with one so admiring that Anna's eyes fell beneath it.

'Now, little Anna,' he said, with a tender, pleading voice, that he knew well how to assume, 'I must tell you a secret. Ever since I saw you first, a child, at a dance at Captain Burford's, I took a great fancy to you. I foresaw that you would be a beauty, and that if you fulfilled your promise, you would be a wife for a prince. I have seen and watched you narrowly for the last three weeks, and my admiration has strengthened, and I have resolved to make you my wife. Shall we just write an affectionate note to my sister-in-law, and tell her we have changed our plans? Will not it be much pleasanter to be mistress of Michelson Hall than to be a governess? and to rule and instruct me rather than my nieces? We will do our best to soften Aunt Betsey;—she is a very fine woman, but did not exactly suit me;—and as to brothers and sister and guardians, they will readily consent, I am sure.'

Mr. Michelson paused, and attempted to take the 'Fairy's' hand, but, scarcely conscious of what she did, she withdrew it. She could scarcely believe that she was Annabella Burton, and that the magnificent Mr. Michelson and his ten thousand a year were at her feet. She rose, burning with passion and anger instead of gratitude. Had he worded his proposal differently, she might have felt at least grateful; but as it was, not even all the splendour of the mansion, its paintings, conservatories, and various beauties, which to an ambitious maiden always possess charms, could do away with the indignation she felt.

'And do you think, Mr. Michelson,' she said, standing before him and speaking rapidly, 'that I am a slave, to be bought and sold at will? Are the Burtons fallen so low that one of the daughters of their house shall be wedded even without being wooed, because riches and position are held out to her? Do you think me a baby, that you tell me you will condescend to marry me, even before you have asked me? Do you suppose that, because circumstances compel me to become a governess, I am to lose my self-respect, my womanly feelings, my very right of choice, and to marry the first man who asks me, even though he be older than my own father was! You might have known women better, had you studied them, than to imagine them so mercenary,—so base. At least you should have known a Burton better. Pride, people say, is our characteristic and our bane; for once, at least, it shall be our safeguard. To

insult me in your own house! I will leave it at once, even if I walk home.'

Hitherto Mr. Michelson had listened in perfect astonishment. He felt alternately annoyed, insulted, angered, and amused, at the way in which his proposal was received. The hint at his being older than her father had been the most galling; but when she spoke of leaving at once, fear overpowered every other feeling. He knew what the world would say if she did so.

Swallowing his passion as best he might, he said,—

'You are the best judge, Miss Annabella, of the propriety of what you have said. But one thing I beg to insist upon. You cannot leave my house until Lady Mansford does, or you will cause an unnecessary gossip in the neighbourhood. I suppose no young lady is anxious for that kind of *éclat*. Of the rest we may be able to talk again when you are calmer, and have thought over all the advantages of my proposal; but I consider that if any one has been insulted in this house, it is I.'

Anna did not condescend to reply to this speech, but with the grace and dignity of a Cleopatra she turned away and left the room. Scarcely had she reached Lady Mansford and Louisa, who were looking for her, than simultaneously Chatham Michelson and Nelson came up, and asked her to dance the next dance with them. Not well knowing what she did, or who was before her, she made a kind of movement of acquiescence, and put her hand on Chatham's arm, who led her towards the quadrille that was forming. Nelson looked hurt and ruffled, and soon after, Louisa, who had watched the proceeding narrowly, saw him leave the room. He did not return again.

'What is the matter?' asked Chatham, when he remarked Anna's agitated manner and flushed face. 'Has any one annoyed you? I am sure something must have happened. You left the room with my father. Where is he? Oh, there! just coming in. He looks as if he had been in a passion; I always know when he is irritated, by the large vein in his forehead. Has anything occurred between him and one of the servants in your presence?'

'Nothing,' said Anna, rousing herself; 'but the heat is so great, and I have danced so much, that I feel rather tired. Is Lady Mansford likely to go home soon?'

'I hope not,' said Chatham. 'I am afraid you have not enjoyed yourself; still you ought to have done so, for surely you have been of all others

'"The cynosure of neighbouring eyes."'

Anna got through the quadrille with some difficulty, scarcely

replying to Chatham's various questions and remarks upon her abstraction. She would have given much to have gone home, but she knew that there was truth and propriety in what Mr. Michelson had said, and she had just self-command enough to walk through the dance. The fact was, that she was in a real, downright passion.

'I do not think you are well,—you look so flushed,' said Chatham. 'Shall I ask Lady Mansford to allow you to be sent home? The carriage can return for the rest of the party.'

'No, I thank you; I would rather remain.' For a moment she felt stiff even towards Chatham, as if everybody connected with Mr. Michelson were odious to her.

'Have I offended you?' he asked anxiously.

'No,' was the brief reply.

'Has any one offended you?'

No answer.

'When do you return home?'

'To-morrow, decidedly.'

'When are you going to Plas Ayron?'

'In about a week or ten days, I believe.'

'The election is the day after to-morrow, and the following day I am to join my regiment.'

'Oh!' said Anna, feeling a sharp pain at her heart.

'Will you allow me to call on you to-morrow afternoon?'

'Certainly, if you feel inclined.'

'Will your brother be displeased? He has never invited me to Fairfield.'

'I do not know; but I scarcely think he will be at home.'

'Can I hope for a private interview with you?'

'It is impossible for me to say.'

Another thrill through the throbbing heart, but no visible emotion, save that of haughty, defiant pride.

'I cannot conceive how I can have displeased you.'

'I am not aware that you have displeased me.'

This brief conversation, carried on during the pauses in the quadrille, partially restored Anna to her self-possession. She saw what Chatham must want with her, and a thousand real and visionary hopes and fears crowded through her mind. She felt that she ought to say something, but knew not how to begin. At last, with a great effort, and the same *hauteur*, she said,—

'I do not know whether Pynsent was too proud to ask you to Fairfield, Captain Michelson, but your father has evidently been too proud to bring you there. He probably would not like you to visit us.'

'I do not ask my father whom I am to visit,' said Chatham,

colouring in his turn; 'I am old enough now to go where I like, even if I cannot return when I like. I will call on you to-morrow.'

Here the final graceful glides and slides of the quadrille brought to a conclusion a conversation in which much of the happiness or misery of two human beings was involved.

Shortly after, Lady Mansford ordered the carriage. Mr. Michelson and Chatham were in attendance, but Anna contrived to secure Sir Thomas's arm, and thus left Mr. Michelson to Lady Mansford, and Chatham to the two young ladies. As they got into the carriage she made Mr. Michelson a haughty bow, which he returned with a look so full of anger, that, for the first time, she feared him. No one could have believed that the agreeable, gentlemanlike, clever Mr. Michelson, whose suavity of manner was so remarkable that some of his foreign friends called him *le suave*, could have worn such a frown on his broad, open forehead, or darted such a glance from his large, bold blue eye. But to know Mr. Michelson, as well as many other charming people, we must try to catch him at home. Fortunately for him, for his son, and for his servants, he is scarcely ever at home,—the world being his home, and he constantly in a new corner of it; he is rarely to be found in private life. To-morrow, however, when he must be at home for a few hours at least, we will again look in upon him, and see whether we can find out his true character beneath that most perfect suavity which he wears as—

'The head and front of his offending.'

CHAPTER XV.

'Ye gallants bright, I rede you right,
Beware o' bonnie Ann;
Her comely face, sae fu' o' grace,
Your heart she will trepan.
Her een sae bright, like stars by night,
Her skin is like the swan;
Sae simply laced her genty waist,
That sweetly ye might span.'—BURNS.

THE breakfast at Michelson Hall was late the following morning, and yet Mr. Michelson sat at the table alone. He appeared to have finished, and to be waiting, not very patiently, for the appearance of a companion. He looked gloomy and angry; and although he had the Somersetshire paper open before him, and professed to be reading the opinions

of the press upon the forthcoming election, he could scarcely have told any one what those opinions were. At last he got up and rang the bell. The footman answered it.

'Tell Captain Michelson that I have finished breakfast, and am waiting to see him before I go out. Say that I have not a moment to lose, as I must be off immediately.' Mr. Michelson fidgeted about for nearly a quarter of an hour, walked up and down the room, looked out of the window, resumed the paper, muttered some inaudible sentences, and finally rang the bell again.

'Did you give my message to Captain Michelson?' he said to the footman.

'Yes, sir; he said that he would come as soon as he was dressed.'

Chatham entered, as if the second bell had summoned him as well as the servant: it certainly was a most imperative pull. He sat down to breakfast with as much *nonchalance* as he could assume, and began to pour out his coffee.

'I wanted to see you, Chatham, before I go away,' began Mr. Michelson.

'Very well, sir, the carriage is waiting,' said Chatham.

'I believe you are to rejoin your regiment the day after to-morrow?'

'Yes; I just wait for the election, and that is all.'

'Did you make any progress last night in the affair that you know I am so anxious about?'

'What affair do you mean?'

'That of proposing for Miss Erskine. I am sure you would not be refused; and there is no time to lose, as you must leave so soon. You may see her again to-day, and certainly will to-morrow.'

'I am not aware that I made any progress.'

'No progress! You mean, I suppose, that you did not propose?'

'I certainly did not.'

The vein in Mr. Michelson's forehead began to swell.

'I presume you mean to do so to day? You know she is worth about fifty or sixty thousand pounds. Everybody expects that you will marry her; indeed, your attentions'—

'My attentions! Nobody can accuse me of attentions, thank Heaven; I have been barely civil to her.'

Mr. Michelson's vein swelled larger.

'But you are aware, sir, that I fully intend her for you, and that I have hinted as much to Lady Mansford. Such chances do not occur every day.'

'I am sorry you should have mentioned your intentions to

Lady Mansford, since they are not mine. I do not mean to marry for money, and certainly am not in love with Miss Erskine.'

'In love! What nonsense you talk! Who marries for love? Fortune, rank, convenience, anything but love, which is a word that ought to be rubbed out of the dictionary; it is only fit for babies or fools.'

'I suppose you married my mother for love?'

'If I did, I could afford it. But she had rank, which I wanted, and, in bringing me a good connection, brought a fair exchange for my money.'

'That kind of bartering does not suit my notions.'

'What right have you to have notions, sir, at your age, and dependent for your very bread upon your father?'

'Upon whom else should I depend?'

'Upon yourself.'

'How? My profession will not support me, and there is no chance of bettering myself by a little timely fighting.'

'Then marry Miss Erskine, and be your own master.'

'And let her support me? I would rather beg than be kept by my wife.'

'Why not as well be kept by your wife as by your father?'

'Surely nature gives us a strong claim on a father, whereas the law alone can make a wife's possessions ours.'

'Pshaw! I suppose if Nature teaches you to fall in love and marry, she teaches you to share your wife's fortune.'

'But I am not in love, at least not with Miss Erskine, and therefore do not intend to marry her.'

'And pray who may you be in love with, if not with Miss Erskine?'

Here Mr. Michelson's vein swelled to its fullest extent, and Chatham also grew red.

'I did not say I was in love with any one.'

'But I ask whether you *are* in love with any one,—the very expression makes me sick.'

'Since you ask me, father, I must say that I am, and that mine is an attachment that neither time nor circumstances can wear away.'

'Oh, of course; all "attachments" are everlasting. And pray who may be the object of your *attachment?*'

'One that you must yourself acknowledge worthy of it; one whom I have often heard you praise to the utmost extent of praise,—Miss Annabella Burton, of Fairfield.'

An expression of anger and passion so deep and fierce overspread Mr. Michelson's whole countenance, that his son was

alarmed. He had seen his father enraged frequently, but never had witnessed such concentrated ire. It was a long time before Mr. Michelson could sufficiently command his temper to speak, and when he did so, his voice trembled, and he made repeated movements of his hands towards his son, as if he would have fallen upon him, but for mere decency's sake.

'Do you mean to insult me by telling me you are in love with that girl?' he said; 'I tell you what, sir, I would see you starve before I would let you marry her. Dare to propose for her, dare to marry her, and you may both beg your bread before I would give you a farthing; I would withdraw your allowance, and drive you for ever from my house.'

Chatham was about to say that his father visited the Burtons, and had actually recommended Annabella to his aunt, but he saw that it was not then the time to do so. He was awed, and feared to reply in any way, either haughtily or humbly, to the harsh words he had heard. He remembered that the man before him, though degraded by fierce passion to the brute, was still his father. Seeing that he was working himself up to increased anger, he merely said,—

'Your carriage is waiting, and I have an engagement; perhaps we had better defer this topic to another opportunity,' and left the room.

In about a quarter of an hour he saw his father drive off, called for his own horse, and rode towards Fairfield.

Whilst he is on his way thither we will take a peep at some of our other friends, who have also risen to a late breakfast, and are in different ways influenced by the unhappy beauty who has fallen, like some stray planet, amongst them.

Captain Burford and Nelson are silent over the *Times* and their coffee for a longer space than usual, the Captain being rather inclined by nature to loquacity; he looks, to use a vulgar expression, grumpy, and seems to wait for his son to say something. The beautiful tortoiseshell cat, that sits purring on his knee, is astonished that she does not receive her usual allowance of toast and butter, and finally mounts upon the table, with a view to helping herself out of the cream-jug.

'Down, Pussy!' said Nelson, stroking her sleek coat and gently lifting her off the table.

'Well,' begins the Captain, 'I must be off for this confounded voting. I wish there were no such things as elections, or that they could be managed differently.'

'I do not think Mr. Michelson will succeed,' says Nelson.

'The deuce you don't! and you suppose we shall have a Whig member for Somerset? Then I'll leave the county.'

'You had better accompany me upon my tour; it would do you a vast deal of good.'

'Tour! where are you going so soon? I should have thought that you would be glad to spend the first six months at home, at least.'

'Why, Douglas intends returning to India shortly, and he wishes me to pay him my visit before he leaves home. I believe I must go now, or not at all.'

In the Captain's mind the following reflections were passing:—

'All's right! By the time he comes back Anna will be safe in Wales, and then he will be sure to turn his thoughts to Jessie again. Besides, he cannot care so much for Anna after all, or he would not go away, just before she is thinking of leaving. Ay, all's right.' The last 'all's right' the Captain uttered aloud; and from the sudden change in his face and manner, Nelson perceived that he was pleased,—at what, he could not imagine.

'You seem glad to get rid of me, my dear father,' said Nelson, feeling mortified.

'No, not exactly that,' said the Captain, who never yet knew what it was to conceal a thought, much less an action; 'but I have my reasons for wishing you to go now, rather than by and by.'

Nelson knew precisely what the reasons were, and thought that they were not quite unlike his own. He determined to go from home at once, to avoid the fascinations of one who, he perceived, did not care over much for him, but he had not any intention of returning to another. Anna Burton, or single blessedness, for him! He might exist in solitary misery, but never wed any one but her. How such a father could have such a son is quite an enigma, unless in this case, as in others, extremes meet. Captain Burford was as open as day, Nelson as secret as night. If the former was glad or sorry, contented or discontented, sick or well, rich or poor, pleased or displeased, everybody connected with him must participate in his humour, and sympathize with him; whereas, if the latter were at the summit of his earthly hopes or in the depths of sublunary disappointment, nobody knew it but himself. The only confidant he had ever had was Jessie, and in her he could no longer confide; why, he did not confess even to himself.

'Father,' he said, after a pause, 'you will be so good as to remember your promise of not attributing any intention of getting married to me. I assure you I do not mean to marry. In short, I do not think it likely I shall ever marry. I am bent on making glory my bride, and feel that the longer I am absent

from my professional duties the more distant is my wedding-day.'

'My dear son, you know my wishes, and the truth is, I cannot help expressing them. If I try to keep them in at one corner of my mouth, they are sure to burst out at the other; and dang my buttons, sir, as James Barnard says, if they shall not be gratified in spite of you! Not that I mean to force your inclinations. You may marry glory if you like; but take my word for it, the slut will leave you a widower, and then you will come back to—you know who, but we never mention names.'

Here Captain Burford rose from the breakfast-table, and went to prepare for his electioneering matters, whilst Nelson remained awhile deep in thought. Of course he was thinking of Anna; young men never think of those whom their fathers and mothers request them to think of. His reflections were not agreeable. He thought of her as a consummate little coquette, who was trying to attract not only Mr. Michelson and Chatham, but everybody else she came near; and the worst of the matter was, she succeeded.

Whilst Nelson slowly rises to prepare to accompany his father, we must look in upon another late breakfast-table, and see in what state of mind the cause of all this uneasiness finds herself.

Anna Burton looks somewhat pale and weary, but excited. She is earnestly declaring to Sir Thomas and Lady Mansford that she must return home immediately after breakfast.

'But, my dear Miss Burton,' said Lady Mansford, 'Sir Thomas is going to use the carriage, and therefore you have no choice but to stay.

'Oh! if he will only drive us to the turnpike, we can easily walk the rest of the way; or if you will kindly tell the turnpike gate-keeper to send to my sister, she will send at once for us. It is really necessary that I should be at home now.'

'But why to-day?' asked Lady Mansford; 'it is cruel to leave Miss Erskine and me alone. All the gentlemen will be away.'

'I am very sorry,' stammered Anna, looking imploringly at Louisa Colville, 'but I do not feel very well.'

'Oh, we will nurse you! and to-morrow we shall have a famous party,—all the beaux in the country.'

'I think we really ought to go to-day, Lady Mansford,' said Louisa. 'Miss Burton has written so often to fix the day for our return, that we must not put it off any longer.'

'I expected a supporter in you, Miss Colville,' said Sir Thomas, 'and you, too, are turned against us. But if you are quite decided, all I can say is that I am very sorry. To tell the

truth, I am going with Mr. Michelson this morning, and the carriage is therefore at your service; only I hope you will change your minds.'

Anna shook her head, and said she was very sorry, but she must go.

'Then I must wish you good-morning, as I am to meet Michelson at the Lodge; I must not say good-bye, but *au revoir*.' And Sir Thomas left the breakfast-room, to go, like all the rest of our male friends and acquaintances, to vote for Michelson.

No, not all. We must make one exception, and travel to one more breakfast-table to make it. We must go back some two or three hours, since a Fairfield breakfast is punctually at eight o'clock, and Jessie is always ready, and the tea made, a quarter of an hour earlier.

Uncle James has ridden over at dawn, to talk about the election; and he, Pynsent, Charles, and Tiny are assembled. They have always to wait some minutes for Aunt Betsey, who cannot bring herself to be quite punctual, particularly in the winter.

'Why, Pynsent, I never knew you so stubborn,' said Uncle James, holding his knife and fork rather inelegantly on end, and letting a thin slice of ham dangle on the prongs of the latter. 'What objection can a youth like you have to vote with your uncle? Besides, Mr. Michelson has been so kind to you.'

'That is the worst part of it,' replied Pynsent. 'I wish all his bottles of wine and baskets of fruit were with Pharaoh and all his host. Once for all, uncle, I cannot vote for Mr. Michelson. I don't like him or his politics; and I am not going to sell my birthright, like Esau, for a mess of pottage.'

'What does the boy mean? How these young chaps do get on!' muttered Uncle James. 'Good morning, ma'am,' he added in a flurried manner, as Aunt Betsey made her appearance; 'I am trying to persuade our nephew Pynsent to vote for Mr. Michelson, and he begins to talk about a mess of pottage.'

'Well, uncle, my birthright as an Englishman is liberty to vote according to my conscience; and the mess of pottage is the wine and fruit. I think it a very apt simile.'

'But your father was a Tory, boy; and you are a Tory, ma'am, if I don't mistake?'

'Decidedly,' said Aunt Betsey; 'but Pynsent is quite unlike the rest of us.'

'My father was not a Tory of the Michelson school, a milk-and-water, half-and-half mixture, but a downright glass of original

strong spirits,' said Pynsent, 'and if Mr. Michelson were like him, I might almost be brought to vote for him; but as it is, I beg to decline. He doesn't know what he is himself yet, and nobody else can guess. He is an old fop and dandy, and cares for no one but himself.'

'He is very kind,' whispered Tiny, 'and says he will help Charley.'

'Indeed! We are much obliged to him. I am thankful to say we can help ourselves. But you are a good little girl to take his part.'

'Come, Jessie,' said Uncle James, 'see what you can do with Pynsent.'

'Don't ask me, uncle,' said Jessie; 'I could not wish him to do anything against his conscience. I am no politician myself, but I confess I like to see a man one thing or another. I would rather have Captain Burford's red-hot Toryism than Mr. Michelson's "all things to all men."'

'Miss Betsey, won't you say something?' said Uncle James.

'Pynsent has long ceased to think anything of my advice,' replied Aunt Betsey.

'The long and short of the matter is,' said Pynsent, swallowing hastily his last mouthful of bread-and-butter, 'I have no time to vote at all. Do you not know that I am a professional man, and every hour of my day is cut out? I daresay I shall find my surgery full against I get there. Let me see: I have one old woman with sore eyes; an old man with inflammation of the windpipe; a boatman's child in the croup. And as to my aristocratic patients,—why, they are really legion!'

'You always make a joke of everything,' said Jessie, laughing.

'A very comfortable characteristic,' replied Pynsent; 'one must be jocular to make a bit of fun out of the obstinate fools I have to deal with. That same old man, for instance,—my first patient,—I told him to put a mustard plaster or some turpentine to his throat; and when I came back, he had not done it, and his throat was really in an alarming state. I asked the reason. "He wasn't a-going to burn himself to death with them hot nostrums. He never heard of such a thing all his days, and wasn't a-going to begin now. He knowed what a blister was, very well, and what leeches was; but he'd be dashed if he'd be cooked with mustard and turpentine!"'

'Haw! haw! haw!' roared Uncle James till the oaken ceiling rang; 'you're a fine fellow, Pynsent, but the old un had his peculiarities. I vow I shouldn't like the application either.'

'But I had it done, uncle, *nolens volens;* and now I am off to repeat the dose if the throat is not better.'

'But the election?' began Uncle James once more: 'will you come with me, and vote for us?'

'Have you any conscience?' asked Pynsent. 'Will you come with me, and vote for the opposite party? Mr. Michelson is not my landlord.'

'Do you mean to say, sir, that I am influenced by being a tenant of Mr. Michelson?' said Uncle James, getting red.

'I do not think you would vote for him if you were not his tenant,' replied Pynsent somewhat bluffly.

Jessie saw that a storm was rising, and hastened to lull it.

'There is nothing to be made of Pynsent, uncle, when he takes a thing into his head; so the best way is to let him alone. Pynsent, you had much better go to your old man, or he may be burned to death by this time. I hope you told him when to take off his plaster, or, depend upon it, he has got it on still. I once applied one, and my patient resolutely kept it on for nearly three hours.'

'What was the result?' asked Pynsent, getting interested.

'Why, his wife came to entreat me to let Tom take off that dreadful mustard,—he was in such a state there was no living with him; she thought he was going mad. I got into a fright, and returned with her; and certainly Tom was almost out of his mind. Imagine his state when the plaster was removed: he tore about the room, raving at me and the plaster by turns. But he was thoroughly cured, and the threatened inflammation of the chest departed.'

'Dear me!' said Pynsent, 'could any one be so ignorant? Good-morning, uncle; I must see after my mustard.'

'I think you want a little cress with it,' growled Uncle James; 'you're the most obstinate, impudent dog I ever saw. Jessie, will you order my horse? I must go without him, I suppose.'

Uncle James departed in a bad temper, and the rest of the family set about their usual avocations until two o'clock, when, to their surprise, Anna and Louisa arrived. Scarcely had a few questions been put and answered, when Anna beckoned Jessie up-stairs, and, going into the bedroom of the latter, bolted the door, and, throwing her arms round her sister, burst into tears.

Jessie was alarmed; but it was some time before she could obtain an explanation of Anna's emotion. At last she elicited the history of Mr. Michelson's proposal, and of Chatham's attentions and intended visit; together with a partial confession of Anna's attachment for Chatham, which she was led to suppose, from her manner rather than her words, to be, unfortunately, as strong as all her attachments were.

Jessie's keen common sense perceived at once that no good

could arise out of such an unfortunate combination of circum stances. She tried to stem Anna's indignation against the father, and to point out the madness of encouraging the admiration of the son, but in vain. She considered herself insulted by the proposal of the one, and honoured by what she foresaw would be that of the other. Jessie set to work to manage the private interview which was evidently pending. Aunt Betsey was the difficulty. She asked Louisa Colville to propose a walk. She did so, and the proposal being accepted, she and Aunt Betsey set forth, and took Tiny with them. Jessie then told Charles, in few words, the state of the case, and he betook himself to his own room to meditate upon it. As soon as Anna was sufficiently composed, the sisters went together to the parlour, and there awaited the arrival of Captain Michelson. Jessie did her best to impress upon Anna's mind the propriety and necessity of some degree of caution and reserve with one of whom she knew so little; and she entreated her not to rush into an engagement with him, supposing he should wish it, under the present circumstances. On the other hand, she endeavoured to brace her mind against the possibility of his being, like so many of whom she had heard and read,—his father, for example,—merely an admirer of good looks, and not one who wished to marry.

Anna always listened to her sister with the docility of a child. She was the only one who could influence her. Wilful and almost imperious with others, with her she was still in leading-strings—the strong leading-strings of affection. She looked upon Jessie as wholly superior to every one else in the world, in all excepting mere beauty and accomplishments; and not even the strict propriety of Miss Primmerton's, or the careless gaiety and ease of Sir Thomas Mansford's, had succeeded in shaking her faith in her.

Chatham arrived, and as most of my readers have doubtless felt the sensation that the knock at the door of an anxiously-expected guest sometimes occasions through the whole frame, beginning at the heart and vibrating every nerve, I need not describe how Anna trembled and turned from pale to red, and how even Jessie got up and sat down twice before he came into the room.

No one would have supposed, from Chatham's appearance, that he had come to make a declaration of love. His handsome and usually joyous face was clouded and melancholy. He scarcely knew how to begin any kind of conversation; and when Jessie spoke of the ball, and made an effort to break through the restraint they were all feeling, he scarcely cared to reply.

After what she considered a proper space for propriety, Jessie left the room. She tried to busy herself about various household duties: she could not perform them. Her heart was with the darling sister committed to her care by her mother on her deathbed; her, for whom she would gladly have sacrificed her own happiness, but who, she foresaw, would have much to suffer in this life. She went to her own room, and there she sought to tranquilize her mind, and to think over what would be the right course to pursue, under the different aspects that matters might wear. As was her custom in all hours of difficulty, she committed herself to her heavenly Father for direction and counsel, feeling assured that He would guide, as He had hitherto done, His erring orphan children aright, and make all things work together for their good.

CHAPTER XVI.

'In one little body
Thou counterfeit'st a bark, a sea, a wind;
For still thy eyes, which I may call the sea,
Do ebb and flow with tears; the bark thy body is,
Sailing in this salt flood; the winds, thy sighs.
Who,—raging with thy tears, and they with them,—
Without a sudden calm, will overset
Thy tempest-tossèd body.'—*Romeo and Juliet.*

'JESSIE, go to him! do something,—say something, I entreat you!' said Anna, bursting into Jessie's room, and, as usual, casting her arms around her.

'What is the matter, Anna?' asked Jessie.

'I cannot stop to tell you now: he will be gone. I tried to do as you told me, and I am afraid I have been rude, unkind, unjust,—for how can he help his father? But go quick; be gentle, and make up for my hardness of heart.'

Jessie ran down to the parlour, and found Chatham standing hat in hand, as if uncertain whether to go or stay, and looking the very picture of despondency.

'Oh, Miss Burton, what can I do? I have offended your sister, and am wretched,' he began, seizing Jessie's hand as if he were grasping something that must extricate him from his doubt and difficulty.

'She seems to think she has offended you,' returned Jessie quietly, 'but she was so excited that I scarcely understand what the difference is between you.'

'Can you spare me ten minutes, that I may explain what has passed since your sister left home?'

'Certainly.' Jessie pointed to a chair, and, seating herself on another near Chatham, listened as composedly as she could to his communication.

He told her, in the first place, that he was in love with Anna, and wished to marry her. That he had broached the subject to his father, who opposed it vehemently. That he had requested an interview with Anna to declare his intentions, but was reduced by the wrath of his father to a mere statement of painful facts. That he had believed it right to state these facts to her, and that she had received his communication indignantly, giving him to understand, indirectly, that his father was his rival. She had acknowledged no affection for him, but had declared that she would never marry any one whose family would not receive her. That he had entreated her to become engaged to him unknown to his father, and to wait until he was his own master, and could marry her in spite of opposition, but that she had refused.

'She did quite right,' said Jessie steadily.

'I had hoped that you would have been my friend,' said Chatham.

'Not in the way you imagine: I should neither be your friend nor my sister's, if I encouraged anything secret and clandestine. How are you to become your own master, if I may be allowed to ask so plain a question? Is it by the death of your father you look forward to being so?'

'Not exactly; I have nothing at present independent of him. But on the death of my grandmother, my mother's only surviving parent, I come into possession of about four or five hundred a year.'

'Perhaps, if you were to become engaged to Anna, it might make you desirous of her death?'

'God forbid! She is the kindest and best of women.'

'Then do not put yourself in a position to desire it. Have you no present means? I am sorry on your own account that you should be wholly dependent on any one, it must so cripple your energies.'

'I have nothing but my pay, and that, with my allowance from my father, barely suffices to keep my stud and servant.'

Jessie was silent.

'Can you give me no hope, Miss Burton?'

'I fear not. Anna's happiness is too dear to me to allow me to give you any.'

'What do you mean? Do you not think I should devote myself to making her happy?'

'I do not know; but that is not the question. She could not be happy as a wife unless she were one of her husband's family. She is proud.'

'But my father would have placed her in the position of head of his establishment.'

'That is the very reason that he will not admit her as such, being his son's wife. You, I am sure, feel confident that he would never forgive you if you were to marry her.'

Chatham had nothing to say, and Jessie was silent awhile, thinking. At last she added,—

'It is evidently impossible that you can marry my sister now. It is doubtful whether you may be ever able to do so. Elderly people frequently outlive young ones, and you may die before your grandmother. Moreover, you may change: I have heard that soldiers are naturally given to change their loves with their quarters.' Here Jessie blushed deeply, for she thought of Nelson. 'Not that I have any reason to suppose that you will do so,' seeing Chatham look angry. 'The best and most proper thing to look forward to is the possibility of your father's relenting'—

'Never!' broke in Chatham; 'I know him too well. He does not love me, or any one else but himself.'

'Hush! a son should not lay bare his father's faults.' Jessie had been so used to give advice and gentle lectures, that this hint slipped out unawares, and Chatham, for the first time in his life, took it patiently.

'May I see your sister again?' he asked.

'Why? she would only show the proud side of her nature if she came again; and you had better take my assurance that she is sorry that she said anything to annoy you.'

'Does she—do you think she does'—

'What?'

'Does she love another?'

'I do not think she does.'

'I sometimes flattered myself that she preferred me; but then she has a way that no one else has, of winning everybody, and making each fancy himself the favoured one. Do you think she has any regard for me? does she—does she love me, in short?'

'If I knew, I would not tell you. That she has a certain preference for you, I have no doubt; but, like yourself, she is young, and I do not think very firmly settled in her opinions or attachments.'

'Then she will not be constant to me, you think?'

'I think you are both likely to change.'

'Miss Burton, I never saw any one so straightforward as you.'

'Am I? I did not know it. I merely say to you what I think, because it is right. I hope I have not seemed rude or unkind; I did not mean to be so. I feel for you very much.'

Here Jessie held out her hand, and Chatham impressed a very brotherly kiss upon it.

'Will you go to her once more, and tell her that I should like to part from her as a friend? I leave the day after to-morrow, and I know not when I may see her again,—perhaps never.'

Jessie left the room. She found Anna in the large chair by the fire, her face buried in her hands on her lap, weeping bitterly. She delivered Chatham's message. Anna rose, hastily wiped her eyes, and said she would go to him. They descended together.

'Come in with me,' said Anna; 'I am not strong enough to resist anything that he may ask.'

Chatham looked very much pained when he saw Anna's pale cheeks and tearful eyes.

'I have acted selfishly,' he said; 'forgive me! I ought not to have come here. I hope you are not displeased with me?'

Anna held out her hand; she could not speak.

'When you think of me,' said Chatham, addressing both sisters, 'if you ever do think of me, remember that I am almost alone in the world. With apparent splendour, property, friends, a father who is reckoned the patron of the arts and an encourager of talent, a brilliant position in the army, and some degree of reputation in society, still I am a lonely man,—I have no one to love me.'

Anna glanced into his eyes. Had he no one to love him? The answer was 'Yes.' He pressed her hand.

'But your grandmother—your aunt?' said the more matter-of-fact Jessie.

'My grandmother dotes on me, and my aunt, I believe, really loves me; but'—

'How many thousands are there in the world worse off than you!' said Jessie. 'And oh! try to remember that we have all a Father in heaven, who is more to us, if we seek Him, than father, mother, brother, and sister.'

Jessie's solemn manner affected Chatham for a moment; but he was volatile, and, alas for him! not religious. He smiled slightly, and whispered,—

'You do not say than "wife."'

Jessie shook her head and sighed.

'Perhaps you may understand my words some day,' she said.

Footsteps were heard in the court. In spite of his smile at Jessie's assurance of Divine aid, the last words that he spoke, as

he bent over Anna's hand, were 'God bless you!' How often are those solemn words used when the heart is firmly centred in some earthly object, and far removed from the Great Being whose name is on the lips!

Chatham rushed through the passage, and found his way out by the back door. Anna hastened up-stairs, and, throwing herself on her sister's bed, gave way to the most passionate grief. Had she suddenly lost the sister she loved best in the world, she could not have wept more bitterly than she did at this separation from one whom she had known but a few weeks. This is folly; and against such folly the mind should brace itself as with bands of iron. Look to it, ye young women, who consider such partings as the one great grief of existence, and remember that you have no time given you to waste in the outpouring of such feelings. Your tears will be called for by and by, for life-long separations from father, mother, brother, or sister,—perchance husband or child. Spare, then, your tears for deathbeds, scenes of poverty and misery, or for the parting from the beloved of years. Spare them for time misspent, and unkind words and unholy thoughts; for, be assured, sooner or later they will flow for such things; but oh! waste not more than a few natural tears of regret upon passing fancies and worldly disappointments.

Jessie said with truth that Anna had a sick headache, and thus accounted for her non-appearance that day. As soon as she was calm enough to talk, Jessie tried to reason her into the conviction that, as matters stood, it was better that the separation between her and Chatham should be final, but this she found impossible. Her one great hope still was, that as soon as he was independent of his father, he would marry her. She entreated Jessie not to tell Pynsent or Aunt Betsey of her interview with Chatham, or its results.

'I think that would not only be unwise, but not quite right,' said Jessie; 'sooner or later it must come to their knowledge, and then they would justly accuse us of deceit and want of confidence. Never, my dear Anna, let there be any secrets in our family: we are left to our own judgment young; let us help one another. Every pleasure and pain that we share frankly will serve to bind us more firmly together. As to poor Aunt Betsey, I own I shall dread to tell her about Mr. Michelson; still, truth must be told, and it may serve to put an end to the foolish hope that, I fear, she still has of being yet married to him.'

'I wish I were more like you, Jessie. I never know how to act in difficult matters, and am always following my own impulses.'

'There is One above, dearest child, who will teach us to

subdue our impulses, and to act with judgment and discretion, if we ask Him humbly.'

'When I begin to teach in earnest, and to feel that others depend upon me, perhaps I shall be better,' said Anna meekly.

'Let us pray that you may be kept from temptation,' said Jessie, the tears rushing to her eyes as she looked on her beautiful sister's downcast face. 'After all, that is the simplest and most efficacious prayer. If we pray to God to remove the temptation, we need not fear to fall into it.'

Jessie and Aunt Betsey were closeted together that evening till it was almost time to go to bed. Pynsent had returned, and questioned Louisa Colville upon the state of the household, but as she knew nothing positive, she was prudent enough to hazard no guesses. He proposed continuing certain instructions in chess that he had been giving her; and she, nothing loth, sat down to be schooled and politely scolded, and finally check-mated, by the somewhat dogmatic and very straightforward Pynsent. When they had played four successive games, and when Tiny, tired of watching them and collecting the men, had fallen asleep on the settle by the side of Charles, Pynsent grew fidgety, and asked Miss Colville to excuse him for a few minutes. He went up-stairs, and, hearing sounds in Aunt Betsey's room, he went thither. He stopped a moment, when something like a sob met his ear. He tapped at the door, and, receiving no answer, and hearing a repetition of the sob, accompanied by Jessie's voice, he took the liberty of opening the door. He found Aunt Betsey apparently recovering from a fit of hysterics, and Jessie administering cold water and smelling-salts.

'What is the matter?' he began.

'Hush!' said Jessie, motioning him to the door; but he did not take the hint.

'Aunt Betsey,' he said, 'what is the matter? Are you ill?' and in a professional way he began to feel the pulse. 'Hysteria, from some mental agitation. What can have happened to produce such a quickened pulsation?'

'My dear Pynsent!' sobbed Aunt Betsey. 'That vile man! I call upon you to expiate—to—to—avenge my honour! That ungrateful girl—serpent—that I have nourished!'—

Here followed violent hysterics.

'Aunty! dear aunty!' began Jessie, 'she could not help it.'

'Help what?' asked Pynsent.

'Mr. Michelson has proposed for Anna,' whispered Jessie.

'The old fool!' was Pynsent's ungracious remark.

More hysterics.

'Go and get me some sal-volatile,' said Pynsent to Jessie.

Jessie left the room.

'Now, Aunt Betsey,' said Pynsent very sternly as to words, but with an irrepressible smile at the corner of his mouth, which gave an unusually comic expression to his features, 'I will trouble you to be quiet. If you are not, I must have recourse to the only remedy in such cases, a good shaking.

'Oh, Pynsent! if you only knew!'

'I know very well that you are exposing yourself most ridiculously. A pretty example to set to your nieces! You, a woman of fifty!'—

'Forty!—you know it is only just past forty!'

'Never mind, I thought it was sixty; but it is quite time you should give up such absurd notions. Mr. Michelson has never given a thought to you since you were three-and-twenty, as you may now see by—the old ass! "there is no fool like an old fool"—his falling in love with Anna.'

'Ah! that is the dreadful part of it. She has been trying to supplant me; she has—she has used the most shameful arts!'

More hysterics.

Pynsent put himself into a pugilistic attitude.

'Aunt, I see I must shake you; it is the only cure,' laying his hands on her.

'Don't—I won't—I will—you cannot understand these feelings. You have never loved.'

'God forbid!' exclaimed Pynsent, laughing outright.

'Cruel, unfeeling boy!' said Aunt Betsey, shedding, for the first time, a few tears.

'Now, my good Aunt Betsey,' he said, slightly softening, 'pray put an end to this nonsense! Just reflect,—at your advanced age!'—

'What do you mean, sir?' (No woman ever can bear an appeal to her age until she is a hundred, when she gets proud of it as a singularity.)

'That at your age you should be thinking of another world.'

Here Jessie appeared with the sal-volatile.

'Miss Colville is waiting for you, Jessie, and wondering what in the world has happened to disarrange our evening. If you will go to her, I think I can cure Aunt Betsey.'

Jessie lingered, but Pynsent looked so resolved that she at last followed his direction; Aunt Betsey continued to sob, and rock herself to and fro.

'Now, my dear Aunt Betsey,' said Pynsent, seating himself leisurely by the side of his patient, 'having got over the actual hysterics, it will be necessary to master the rest of your complaint. You must at once cease this sobbing, or I would not

answer for the consequences: the swelling and redness of eyes and cheeks, as well as the extension of mouth, caused by hysterics, have been known to remain, and disfigure a person for life.'

'What do you mean, Pynsent?' said Aunt Betsey, starting up from her chair and rushing towards a glass.

She certainly would not have liked to have been, all her days, the object she saw before her. Her passion for her own beauty was greater than for Mr. Michelson. Pale and red alternated, and here and there was a streak of a mixed shade, where the rouge had rubbed off. The portion of beautiful false black hair that was mingled with the equally beautiful real, had come undone, and was visible in its true light. Her eyes and cheeks were swollen, and she looked altogether quite unlike the handsome Miss Betsey Burton she usually saw herself to be.

'Pynsent,' she said, 'I am better now, and should feel obliged by your quitting my apartment.' (She always called her bedroom her apartment.)

'Certainly, aunt, if you will give me one promise first, and that is, not to make this foolish affair further known; and not to allow Anna to fancy you are angry with her, for she could not help it.'

'As to Anna, I will never speak to the ungrateful girl again.' Here a slight sob began.

'For goodness' sake take care, aunt. I really feel alarmed already for your handsome face; use rose-water and remedies directly, or'—

'When you leave my apartment, sir.'

'But Anna, aunt? I positively cannot go away without a promise: she must not be persecuted for what she could not help. Only fancy what your own state of mind would have been in the time of your youth and charms.'

'Pynsent, you take liberties that I cannot permit.'

'I beg your pardon; I only mean that if you had been scolded for all the lovers you were so cruel as to reject, you could never have survived even to your present age, much less to that we fervently hope to see you arrive at.'

Aunt Betsey never knew when Pynsent was joking and when he was serious; now she fancied he was joking, and reproached him accordingly.

'It is very wrong of you to jest about the time I may live, nephew,—as if you did not care how long or how short it was.'

'I assure you, aunty, I never felt less inclined to jest in my life. You know we all love you dearly; only we wish you to give up that horrible man,—don't mention him, I won't,—and

to content yourself with your devoted nephews and nieces,—unless, indeed, you should relent, and think of Uncle James.'

'My dear Pynsent,' said Aunt Betsey, struggling between another sob for the first-named lover, and a smile for the second, 'you talk quite absurdly. Will you leave my apartment?—it is very late, and I feel overcome.'

'But Anna?' persisted the pertinacious Pynsent.

'I shall say nothing to her, do not be afraid; she is beneath my contempt.'

'Good-night, aunty; cheer up. Forget the—hem—we won't mention him. There, give your unworthy nephew a kiss; you know I did not make myself, so I cannot help not being like the Burtons.'

'Poor boy! no,—a pity; but we have not all the same aristocratic natures. Good-night. Stop, Pynsent,—what application would you recommend for my face? I do think it *is* swollen.'

'Dreadfully, aunt! Cold cream, rose-water, weak brandy-and-water.'

'Vulgar! I hate brandy.'

'But medicinally, aunty,—numbers use it medicinally, who would scorn it as a beverage,—even the teetotallers, you know. I understand that quite fine ladies, looking upon it in that light, bring themselves to drink it quite easily. Nasty, of course, but so is all medicine. Good-night.'

Here Pynsent shut the door, and soliloquized in the passage,—

'I may as well have it over at once, and go and congratulate Anna on her conquest.'

He tapped at Jessie's bedroom door.

'Where is Anna? is she here? may I see her?'

'She is in bed, and not well,' said Jessie.

'Then I must prescribe for her,' entering the room unceremoniously.

'So you have had your first proposal, Anna? What did he say to you? Tell me, if you please, or I shall not sleep to-night: I am thinking of making one myself. What, crying, and under such auspicious circumstances! Michelson Hall, and ten thousand a year!'

'Dear Pynsent, you do not know all,' whispered Jessie.

'Tell him,—never mind me,' said Anna.

Forthwith Jessie related the events of the day. When she had concluded, Pynsent went up to Anna's bedside, and gave her a very hearty brotherly kiss, which made Anna's tears flow again.

'Never mind, little beauty, "all's well that ends well;" and how do we know that all may not end well yet? Meanwhile

let us try to forget the name of Michelson, and return to good old Fairfield times and ways: I think you must give up Wales.'

'O no! impossible!' exclaimed Anna, sitting up in bed, and feeling as if her brother were wrenching out her last hope.

'Do you know, Anna, if you have really fallen in love, you have committed the greatest folly of which human nature is capable: it unfits one for everything else, and makes the wisest men noodles. I never mean to fall in love,—no, upon my honour.'

'Then it is very obstinate and unkind of you,' said Anna, suddenly brightening up, and taking Pynsent's hand energetically: 'you know I set my heart on your falling in love with dear Louisa Colville. I was sure you would at first sight; and if you do not before she goes, I shall think you no better than a stone.'

'Bravo, Anna! Do you think me at all suited for a Miss Primmerton's young lady,—pretty, sentimental, accomplished, fine, and an heiress to boot,—I, a poor country apothecary with nothing a-year?'

'You are my brother, and she is my friend.'

'Most excellent reasons both. But, between ourselves, Miss Colville is not exactly to my taste: she is very pretty, certainly, but she is too romantic. I hate sentimental school-girls, that talk of the affections, and never have any real ones; that fall in love at first sight, and yet don't know what love means.'

'I am sure Louisa is not one of them; she never thinks of such things. But you are so vain, that I am certain, at heart, you think nobody good enough for you.'

'You are quite right, most learned sister. I have a vast deal to do before I think of losing my intellects. I shall want them to make a fortune with, first, and then I may be able to afford to let them run wild; by which time, I fear, your friend Louisa will be Mrs. General or Colonel Somebody, in the far East.'

'You are not barely civil to her.'

'I have been teaching her chess for two mortal hours, and actually was polite enough to let her win a game.'

'At all events she is a match for you in repartee.'

'Well, she does let out some quaint, dry, good things now and then, that sound very original.'

'You should see some of her poetry.'

'Now you have gone too far: a poetical young lady! the greatest horror in existence! Do you mean to say she writes poetry? I will fly her society.'

'Then you will punish yourself, I am sure,' here interposed Jessie, laughing, 'for when once you get to know her, Louisa is the most agreeable companion I ever met with. You see so

little of her, that she is not half at home with you yet; and I think you make her nervous, because you are naturally satirical.'

'I should say she was satirical.'

'No, she is only droll: she says quaint, but not unkind things.'

'Well, at all events I am not in love with her, which was, I believe, the beginning of Anna's pathetic appeal; and we are turning night into day; and I came here to congratulate Anna on her first proposal, and now I congratulate her on an escape.'

'I thought you liked Captain Michelson?' said Anna hastily.

'So I do, as a gentlemanly, kind-hearted fellow; but he might not make a good husband for all that. We will not discuss him now, however; so give me a kiss, and be a good girl, and don't cry. Good-night, and God bless you both.'

CHAPTER XVII.

'She is a strange and wayward child,
That Elsie of ours. She looks so old,
And thoughts and fancies weird and wild
Seem of late to have taken hold
Of her heart that was once so docile and mild!'

LONGFELLOW.

WE must pass over somewhat hastily the events of the next few weeks. Aunt Betsey did not make her appearance amongst the family party for two or three days, and saw only Jessie, who confided to Pynsent, between smiles and tears, that she had procured a large bottle of rose-water, a small one of brandy, which was labelled 'cordial,' and some eau de Cologne, all of which she applied from time to time to her face. When she did come down-stairs again she was very stiff and formal, but perfectly civil to Anna, who, after making a few efforts to get into her good graces again, became careless and distant in turn. Anna did her best to appear cheerful; and when Uncle James or Captain Burford rallied her upon having left her heart at Mansford Park, she tried to laugh at their joke, and to seem as merry as ever.

Mr. Michelson lost his election, and, disgusted with the county, the Hall, Fairfield, and everything that he had met with during his stay in Somersetshire, fled again to his dear Italy. Chatham returned to his regiment, on no very affectionate terms with his father, and determined to circumvent him if he could.

Nelson made his appearance at Fairfield one evening, to take leave before his departure for the north. He had put on his coat of mail, and was rigidly careful of his feelings during the few hours he spent with the oldest and dearest friends he had in the world,—friends whom he really and sincerely loved. He saw at a glance that a change had taken place in Anna, and that, although friendly, she had ceased even to try to attract him,—a weakness of which she had decidedly been guilty before. Jessie was sweet and gentle as ever, but somewhat less cheerful; he did not like to inquire why, but he thought because Anna was so soon to leave them. Captain Burford insisted on a rubber, and as Pynsent was engaged to play chess with Miss Colville, and Anna hated cards, he and Jessie were obliged to make it up, and were thrown together as partners, owing to Captain Burford's declaring that he would not play with Jessie because she always would forget his lead. If Nelson and Jessie's eyes met, and they both coloured, it was from different causes. Nelson was thinking of Anna, Jessie of him, and neither of them of the game.

Pynsent and Louisa were seated at a small round table in the opposite corner, and occasionally sending forth a volley of offensive small shot in the way of jests and repartee, which Pynsent liked better than the chess, although he was a good player, and Louisa was improving.

'Check to your king! oh, no such thing!' said Pynsent.

'Poetical!' said Louisa.

'By the by,' maliciously began Pynsent, 'I hear you write poetry?'

Louisa darted a glance at Anna, who sat, unconscious of what was passing, working.

'O yes,' said she coldly. 'I am thinking of publishing; shall I dedicate my book to you?'

Pynsent did not expect this kind of rejoinder. 'I should like to see it first,' he said.

'Just put your king out of check before I go and fetch it,' she returned.

'That is taking an unfair advantage of the interest I was showing in your literary fame. I declare I am in a mess.'

Louisa rubbed her hands, whilst Pynsent sat for nearly ten minutes considering a move.

'Why, Miss Colville, what have you done to Pynsent?' said Captain Burford, looking over his shoulder; 'he seems in a brown study. I hope you have checkmated him; I am sure that is just how he would look if he were about to be mated for life.'

'Is it?' said Louisa, looking at Pynsent and laughing.

'Go on,' said Pynsent; 'you had something more upon your tongue.'

'Only that it would not be a very cheerful prospect,' interposed Nelson; 'I suppose mating for life never is.'

'Was that what you were going to say, Miss Colville?' asked Pynsent. 'Young ladies are not often so cynical.'

Louisa blushed.

'Will you go on with your game, and let us alone?' continued Pynsent; 'you have quite put my intended move out of my head.'

He thought again, and finally moved.

'Checkmate!' cried Louisa. 'Now do not say that you gave me the game; it was very fairly won.'

'A perfect oversight. I am sure I can get out of check;' and he moved his king backwards and forwards, into every possible square, but was finally obliged to allow himself to be mated.

'Will you have your revenge? I know you do not like to be fairly beaten by a lady.'

'I am afraid you must defer it till to-morrow,' interrupted Jessie; 'so you may go to bed conqueror for once, Louisa. I declare Pynsent looks quite crestfallen.'

'Why, you must own it *is* annoying to have such a checkmate as that. Just look! I ought to have moved so, and then the mate I was preparing must have happened in five or six moves.'

'There are some people who never will allow themselves to be beaten,' said the Captain; 'it is rather a good determination in the long-run. "Never say die;" there is a great comfort in feeling that you have the best of it, whatever the world may think.'

'You are very silent to-night, Miss Anna,' said Nelson, moving towards that young lady, in spite of his resolutions to the contrary.

'Am I?' said Anna, starting from her reverie.

'I am going away to-morrow, and shall not see you again before you leave for Wales,' said Nelson.

'I shall have holidays in the summer; you will be back by that time. I shall see you before you go to India,' replied Anna.

'I deserve this cool answer,' thought Nelson, as he sat down on the settle by the side of Charles and Tiny, who had been engaged in alternately reading and drawing whilst the games were going on.

'Will you go to India with me, little missy?' he said, stroking Tiny's soft hair; 'I will get you such a nice little husband.'

'I would rather not, thank you,' said Tiny. 'But you are not going to India for a long time?'

'It is impossible to say how soon.'

'What new crank now?' screamed the Captain; 'by Jove, sir, you are quite incomprehensible.'

Nelson looked at Anna, who appeared to take no kind of interest in the matter.

'What's come to the young people?' said the Captain to Aunt Betsey. 'Do you know what makes Anna so silent, Miss Burton? Is she in love?'

'I cannot say,' replied Aunt Betsey primly.

The Captain stared. 'Well! it's an odd world, but "'twill be all the same a hundred years hence," I daresay;' and he solaced himself with his pipe.

When the time of leave-taking came, Nelson shook hands all round, until he came to Anna.

'Good-bye, Anna; perhaps we may not meet again for years.'

'Do not talk such nonsense,' said Anna gaily; 'of course you will be here in the summer.'

'Good-bye till the summer, then. By the by, did Michelson chance to say at Mansford Park whether he should be down here next summer?'

He fixed his keen eyes upon Anna's, as if he would read her soul. He read quite enough. The blush—the confusion—the stammered 'I do not remember—I—I think not'—told their own tales. He shook her hand coldly, and turned away, saying to himself, 'What a fool I am!'

Jessie was not in the room, and he was in the court before he remembered that he had not wished her good-bye.

'You have quite forgotten me,' said a voice, half sad, half playful. Jessie was lighting Captain Burford out, who had stayed behind to bid her good-night.

'He will forget his head next,' growled the Captain; 'his brains are already here, there, and everywhere.'

'I was just coming back,' stammered Nelson.

'Never mind,' said Jessie gently; 'I hope you will have a very pleasant visit. Good-bye.'

'Good-bye—God bless you, Jessie!' said Nelson, giving her hand the old friendly shake and pressure that always made her happy; 'I wish we were all more like you.'

'What does he mean?' sighed Jessie, watching them through the gate. 'How changed he is! I hope he does not—oh! God grant that he may not—for his own sake—for mine—anything but that'—

Even to herself she could not finish the sentence, and say, 'I hope he does not love Anna.'

'You will take cold,' said a sweet voice by her side, and a little hand lay in hers.

It was Tiny. A quick perception, and the keenest feelings, had told the child that something preyed on Jessie's mind. She had watched her from the bed they shared together, when Jessie had thought her asleep, and had seen her brush tears from her eyes, as she sat dreamily reading, as was her custom before she slept, some book of devotion. Tiny associated this with Nelson,—she did not know why; but she supposed it was on account of the Captain's hints respecting their juvenile attachment. She did not much like Nelson. She thought he was not as kind as he ought to be to Jessie; and that night, when she saw him leave the house without even bidding her farewell, she was very angry with him, and thought, by creeping out after her kind friend, to console her for the neglect. Strange that this quiet child should be the only one of the party, Captain Burford excepted, who had an insight into the real state of Jessie's mind. Anna was too much absorbed in herself to think much of another; Aunt Betsey never had any discernment at all; Pynsent disdained such things as beneath his notice, and felt sure that Jessie had too strong a mind to be made unhappy by any attachment whatever; Louisa Colville could not understand the ins and outs of the case: and Charles was too much absorbed in his painting, future prospects, and endeavours to get rid of his nervous debility, to study the affections.

Here it may be well to say that Charles was getting gradually better. With the aid of Tiny's ever-ready shoulder and a crutch, he managed to move from place to place, and even to walk up and down the sunny path in the garden at midday. Still there was a slight lameness, which Pynsent feared he would never lose. When Charles heard of Mr. Michelson's departure after the election, and of Anna's refusal, his hopes of patronage from him were over. But Uncle James declared he should not be disappointed, but should go to London, and thence to Italy, at his expense.

'Dang my buttons, man, you got the illness by that confounded old bull of mine,' he would say, 'and it is only just that I should bear the consequences.'

'Oh, uncle!' said Anna, 'you know that I can give at least fifty pounds a-year towards Charley's improvement. Thirty will be quite enough for my clothes and travelling expenses.'

'Why, it was only the other day that you dedicated twenty towards paying old Skinner the mortgage!' suggested Pynsent.

'Oh, so I did! Then I can only give forty to Charley, and must make twenty do for myself.'

'And the five pounds a-year for Lizzy Durman!' said Jessie.

'And the numerous donations you promised to send all the work-people!' insinuated Charles.

'And my new desk!' said Uncle James.

'And that expensive book on consumption that I am to have when you receive your first quarter's wages!' said Pynsent.

'My dear Pynsent, how vulgar!' broke in Aunt Betsey; 'pray do not make her position worse than it is.'

'I beg your pardon, Aunt Betsey, it is far from vulgar: all the low people have "salaries," and I assure you "wages" is by far the most uncommon term. You must allow me to say, "When Anna goes to her place, and receives"'—

'Pynsent! I shall leave the room,' said Aunt Betsey, rising.

'There again, aunty, do not all the servants go to "situations"? whereas all the grand people, ministers, and nobody knows who besides, are in "place."'

'There is something in that,' said Aunt Betsey, re-seating herself.

'But the money, Anna?' resumed Uncle James.

'Oh! I am going to keep an account-book,' replied Anna, 'and then I shall know how my money goes.'

Uncle James slipped a five-pound note into her hand, and told her to be a good girl and 'mind her books,' a piece of advice he had given her so regularly every half-year, that he thought it only proper to repeat it on the present occasion.

Leaving home was now no new thing to Anna, and, by a strange inconsistency, she longed to go. On the eve of her departure she was all excitement. One thing preyed upon her mind, which was Aunt Betsey's continued stiffness. She must try to overcome her ill-feelings; with this end in view she tapped submissively at her bedroom door the last thing at night.

'Come in,' said her aunt.

'It is I, aunty,' she said, opening the door.

'Oh!' said Aunt Betsey, with dignified emphasis.

'I am very sorry'—began Anna, much like a naughty child.

'Pray do not give yourself any trouble on my account,' spoke out Aunt Betsey grandly.

'I am going away to-morrow, aunty,—to a new country, almost,—surely you will not part in anger?'

Anna's tears began to flow.

'I am not angry,' said Aunt Betsey, turning away.

'But you are not my own kind indulgent Aunt Betsey; I

want you to be what you were before that horrid man came between us; I hate him.'

'Jessie would say that is unchristian.'

'So it is. But do not you hate him a very little bit yourself? At all events you used to love me, and pet and spoil me; and why should he hinder you now? Come, aunty, make up, as you did years ago, when I offended you.'

Aunt Betsey's eyes were growing moist, and Anna saw it; she threw her arms round her.

'You were much too good for him always, aunty, and are so still.'

'No, no,' sobbed Aunt Betsey, taking Anna to her heart; 'I was foolish—foolish. Take warning by me,' and, leaning her head against Anna, she gave way to violent grief. Nothing but a vision of Pynsent could have checked the hysterics.

Never before had Aunt Betsey made anything like a confession; but now, as if suddenly startled into it, she poured forth the history of her first and only real love. It was enounced in a way peculiar to her, and amidst sobs and tears. She spoke of her beauty as of a thing of which she was perfectly conscious; of her prospects when young; of her trusting, happy girlhood; of the admiration she had excited; of the compliments she received; of the lovers she had had; and finally of her one great disappointment, that had embittered her whole life, and made her, between perpetual hopes and fears, useless to others and herself. As she got excited by her subject, Anna discovered that what *she* now was, Aunt Betsey must have been, with a mind less cultivated and fewer advantages in education. She had had no pious mother or careful sister, but had been the spoiled pride and pet of a weak, fond father. Her vanity and pride of family had been fostered rather than repressed, and she had sinned without knowing that she sinned. Harsh disappointment had been her only teacher, and had not taught her well, because her mind had been unprepared for the reception of his doctrine. Perhaps this opening of her whole heart to her favourite niece was the first genuine effort that heart had made towards self-examination and improvement; let us hope that it may be followed by others.

Anna's tears flowed freely with those of her aunt, and she made many good resolutions during the narrative to avoid the errors into which she had fallen. She felt more compassion and sympathy for her foibles and sorrows that she had ever done before; she experienced a certain consciousness of the sad truth, that in most cases it is want of tenderness and sympathy and gentle probing of the wounded heart that makes so many

wounds incurable. Oh, could we but see sometimes how they bleed, when no eye but God's is looking on,—could we but learn from our blessed Saviour how to handle them, and study how best to heal,—there would be fewer secret sorrows in this life, less of unknown anguish borne with a martyr's resolution, whilst the world is scorning the sufferer, fewer broken hearts, less unreclaimable wickedness, less agony, less crime. In days of chivalry woman studied the art of medicine, and the healing properties of herbs, with a view to the amelioration of bodily suffering; let her now study all the Christian graces, and the way to use them, with a view to healing the broken heart. Instead of the mocking laugh or scornful jest, let her try the winning smile of love and charity; instead of pride and haughtiness, let her use the attractive loadstone of humility; let her seek daily and patiently the deeply-hidden cause of the evils that are festering around her, and then apply the arts that careful study has taught her. Few are there so wretched or so hardened in sin as to be dead to the true spirit of love and sympathy.

The following morning Anna departed, amidst many tears. Pynsent accompanied her on her first day's journey, remained with her the night at the inn where she was to sleep, saw her into the Cardigan mail the next morning at about three o'clock, and, having given her much good brotherly advice, and begged her to apply to him in all her difficulties, returned to Fairfield.

Nothing remarkable occurred there during the next six weeks. Uncle James and Captain Burford came, as usual, for rubbers, and in their capacities of advisers and guardians. Jessie recovered her cheerfulness; Pynsent went on working and grumbling with his patients, and teaching Louisa Colville chess of an evening; and Charles and Tiny continued to draw all possible likenesses, and to love one another with singular depth and warmth.

But all this quiet home happiness came to an end. The friends with whom Miss Colville was to return to India were to sail shortly, and she was summoned to London to prepare for her voyage. Charles determined to be strong enough to accompany her, and Tiny was to travel under their joint care. The notice was short, and poor Louisa, whose feelings were perhaps all the deeper because her natural reserve and shyness prevented their appearing, was in great distress. Even the phlegmatic Pynsent began to think how much he should miss his chess opponent, and to wish there was no such country as India in the world to swallow up pretty young ladies, and

marry them to all kinds of captains, colonels, or gouty generals.

The various packings were completed, and our friends were sitting round the hall fire, talking by fits and starts, and thinking more. Upon two at least of the little party a great change was about to come. Louisa was to quit one country for another, to lose dear friends and find beloved and loving parents. Very mingled were her feelings. The first genuinely happy months that she had spent since she left India, a child, had been passed at Fairfield. She had begun to love every member of the family, particularly Jessie, to whom she, as well as everybody who knew her well, felt drawn by a power that no one else seemed to possess. She knew that if she were in joy or sorrow, she should fly equally to Jessie for sympathy. Pynsent, too, the half uncivil, but true Pynsent,—there was much in him that attracted her. She was grieved that she should never see him again; that even when she returned to England he might be married and removed from Fairfield. She was particularly vexed that he should seem to know so little of her true character, and always look upon her as a smart, fashionable young lady, with no feelings beyond an Indian ballroom, and a full intention of marrying an Indian officer. She had a good deal of discrimination of character, and she knew this was the case. Pynsent systematically despised young ladies. He thought no woman worth a penny until she had lost her beauty, and was verging on old-maidism. They were all alike as long as they were young ladies, and to be admired in the same way as little pigs or puppy-dogs were to be admired, for their looks. He made an occasional exception in favour of a plain girl, because he fancied that if she had no beauty, she had no conceit. This was a decided mistake of Master Pynsent's; for plain people may fancy themselves pretty, and be vain of what they do not possess. Be this as it may, Louisa almost wished herself ugly, that she might prove to Pynsent that there were at least some grains of sterling ore in her character. How she wished her parents were coming to live in England! then she could have Jessie to stay with her, and could, in turn, often visit Fairfield. Now she was going away for ever.

Upon Charley, too, this journey to London was producing strange effects. He was about to make the first step toward the high point at which he aimed,—to see paintings, to hear of paintings, to study paintings, to look upon the originals of those masterpieces of the art that he had as yet only seen engraved; to labour with an end in view,—a noble end,—the production of works equal to those he hoped to see. The weak,

shrinking, sensitive boy became a man as by sudden transition, and Tiny looked upon him as already a Correggio.

Poor Tiny! Many and sad were the tears she shed at the prospect of leaving Fairfield. Not even the certainty that Charles would be in London could make up to the child for parting with Jessie, and quitting the dear, cheerful, happy country place that had been to her beautiful as one of her child-dreams. Every pigeon, every fowl, the robins that came upon the window-sill, nay, into the house, for crumbs, the big Newfoundland dog, the rooks that cawed in the elm trees, the cattle, the rough farm-servants,—every thing and person belonging to Fairfield,—had twined round her young heart like ivy round a tender sapling. And now to be obliged to go back to dull, dusty, lonely Peckham, without any one who could enter into her deep thoughts, or understand why she was so quiet and unlike a child!

'Will you come and keep house for me, little deary?' said bluff, kind-hearted Uncle James, putting down his pipe, and taking her on his knee. He had been watching the quiet tears steal down her cheeks and her furtive efforts to conceal them, and could stand it no longer. 'I want a housekeeper: Jessie can't come, and Anna won't; what do you say?'

'I wish I was big enough,' whispered Tiny, resting her head on her friend's shoulder, and letting the tears hide themselves in his coat; 'but mother wants me at home.'

'It is very hard that I can never get a housekeeper,' said Uncle James, glancing at Aunt Betsey, majestically knitting, yet colouring slightly, as if conscious by intuition.

'Tiny is going to get big, and marry me,' said Captain Burford, actually rising from his seat to cross over and stroke the back of her head, as she hid her face on Uncle James's shoulder. 'We will have such a wedding! And who knows but we may get up another at the same time?' he added, glancing at Jessie. 'I wish Nelson was here,—hang the lad!'

Sympathetic tears were beginning to appear in Louisa's eyes, and Jessie's were already full; Tiny began to sob.

'Come, come, cheer up! 'Twill be all the same a hundred years hence; won't it, Miss Burton?' said Captain Burford.

Even Aunt Betsey was wiping her eyes, whilst Pynsent, the heartless wretch, was only thinking of the fire. How busily and impatiently he pulls about that huge piece of wood, and treads upon the big tabby cat, and pshaws, and wishes the cat would keep her place, quite heedless of the pain poor puss is feeling in her tail and the corner of one paw, thanks to his great thick boot.

'Pynsent, how clumsy you are!' cries Aunt Betsey, forgetting Tiny in her sympathy with her favourite cat.

'Tiny, you had better come to bed, dear,' said Jessie; 'you must be up early, and will want a long night's rest.'

Good Uncle James put his arm round the child and kissed her, whispering, with a woman's tenderness, that she must buy something up in London to keep for his sake, and slipping a sovereign into her hand. Tiny tried in vain to say thank you; and, hurrying from one to the other with kisses and good-nights, she went, sobbing her little heart out, up-stairs with Jessie. For the first time the independent little child-woman passively allowed herself to be undressed. Jessie let her grief have way. When the night-gown was on, and Jessie took the brush to arrange her long, soft hair, she seemed to recollect herself, and to make an effort to cease crying. She looked up into her kind friend's face, and the expression of her eyes was so mournful that Jessie was pained by it.

'Tell me why you are so very unhappy, Tiny,' she said, as the child threw her arms about her.

'I do not know,—I cannot tell,—because I am wicked; but I am so very, very sorry to go away.'

Jessie sat down, and drew her towards her. 'If you have any sorrow, and can confide in me,' she said gently, 'I will be a true friend, darling.'

'It is not a sorrow, and it is a sorrow,' sobbed the child. 'My mother sometimes looks sadly on me, and sometimes talks as if I did not belong to her, and wonders what will become of me; and Mrs. Hicks, who lives with your uncle, is unkind, and says wrong things to me, that hurt me at my heart, and make me feel as if I should almost die.'

'What can she say to you, dearest child? She cannot mean to hurt you.'

'I suppose not, but she does. Sometimes she says I have no right to come there with honest people; and my mother has no right to be living upon other folks' money, and that we ought to be ashamed of ourselves. Indeed, I do not know why. I think, and think, and try to do well; and mother is very good and kind, if she is not as clever as you and Anna. I try very, very hard to learn, that I may do something for myself, because I know she means that Mr. Barnard keeps us; and mother and I sew all day to earn what we can, and she is not strong; and we both feel it all very much, but we never talk to one another about it. It seems stranger than ever to me, now I see how different everything is here, and how happy you all are. I wish I could know how to keep myself; I think I shall be able soon.

I would rather be a servant; I should like to be Mr. Barnard's or your little servant; but I cannot bear what Mrs. Hicks says, even though I cannot quite understand what it means.'

Tiny had told her little tale, interrupted by many sobs. Perhaps she had never spoken so much before at once. Jessie had listened with great interest and surprise: strange fancies crowded into her mind. She had often wondered what had given her uncle such an interest in the child, and how he had become her guardian, and why he had forbidden Anna, from the first, to ask about her. Now she wondered more; but she set to work to console Tiny, and to think how she could best help her.

'You must not mind what Mrs. Hicks says, love, so long as you do your duty. If you pray to God, He will make your path clear for you in His good time.'

'I do, Jessie, I do; and I feel comforted.'

'That is right, Tiny. Whenever you have any sorrows or joys, carry them, either by prayer or praise, to your Father in heaven. Whenever you want an earthly friend, come to me or write to me: whatever I can do I will, please God. Perhaps you may be obliged to support yourself young,—it is impossible to say,—and you must be usefully brought up. You will do your best, I am sure, for Uncle Timothy's sake, as well as your mother's and your own.'

'O yes!' sobbed Tiny; 'I only want to know how. I should like to begin to-morrow. I can work, and read, and write now, and cipher a little. I will try hard,—indeed, indeed I will.'

'Now, dear, you must get into bed; you are shivering with cold. How thoughtless of me! Wrap this great shawl all round you. There! Will you say your prayers with me to-night? We will ask God to tell us what to do for your good.'

Tiny knelt down at Jessie's knees, and repeated her child's prayer, in which Jessie joined, adding her own supplications for the little innocent who had so trustingly confided in her love. She saw her into bed, and watched by her till she fell asleep, thinking how little her own disappointments seemed, by the side of the real trials that are for ever renewing in the great battle of life.

CHAPTER XVIII.

'The mistress of the mansion came,
Mature of age, a graceful dame;
Whose easy step and stately port
Had well become a princely court.
Meet welcome to her guests she made,
And every courteous rite she paid.'—SCOTT.

EVERYBODY knows that the life of a governess is rarely a happy life. We are not going to dive into the causes of this fact, but a fact it is. It matters not whether the fault is on the side of the governess, or on that of the family in which she resides, or on both sides; but she seldom feels at home with those in whose service she is passing an existence. I believe custom has a great deal to do with this: it is the fashion for governesses to be isolated human beings. What one lady does another must do. It is her duty, as well as her profession, to teach and amuse children, and of course she must be doing her duty morning, noon, and night. Fashionable mothers may do their duty at second-hand; and, having obtained a lady to fill their places with their children, may follow their own devices, reserving the blessed privilege of politely lecturing their governess if their children are not in all respects as perfect as they feel assured they ought to be. What matter if the said governess does feel aggrieved and angry? if she does shed bitter tears when she retires at night, after a hard day's fagging, to her bedroom? if she does wish herself dead, or starving at home with the mother or invalid sister, or, maybe, worthless husband, whom she helps to support? She ought to be ashamed of herself for so doing; she ought to feel grateful for her salary, food, and lodgment; she ought to study all kinds of unknown tongues, and practise on all kinds of musical instruments,—yea, verily, as many as Nebuchadnezzar caused his musicians to play,—and all with a view to teaching them again to those beloved pupils, whose parents are so considerate for her happiness and comfort! There may be some Beckey Sharps in the world who are seeking nothing but their own pleasure and good, to the neglect of the children committed to them; and there are also some mistresses of families who strive, heart and hand, to make those around them happy, and who especially consider the governess thrown upon their care and kindness by untoward circumstances in their own homes: but these, on both sides, are rare. Beckey Sharp has been keenly and ably described by one who truly has 'the pen of a ready writer.' With a pen less

brilliant and pointed, but, I would fain hope, as true, let me endeavour to paint the exception on the other side,—the employer who strives to do *her* duty.

The Lady Georgiana Meredith received Anna Burton with a warm and friendly shake of the hand. She called her two pretty, shy, smiling children to her, and, taking a hand of each, put the little trembling fingers into each of Anna's hands, and said she hoped they would be very good children, and strive to make Miss Burton very happy. Anna pressed the little hands, and longed to kiss the sweet innocent faces, but did not quite know whether it would be right. The eldest, little Violet, soon settled her doubts by holding up a blushing, inviting cheek, to which the second, Rose, added another. Anna kissed them with all her heart, and Lady Georgiana looked smiling on. Then her ladyship led Anna across the room to a large easy-chair by the fire, where an elderly lady was sitting, also smiling. She rose when Anna approached, curtseyed, and held out her hand.

'We are all very glad to see you, Miss Burton,' she said, re-seating herself; 'are we not, Violet?'

'O yes, grandmamma,' said the little girl, glancing very lovingly into Anna's beautiful face,—the very face to attract a child.

'I am very much obliged, very,' said Anna, with tears in her eyes; she had little expected such a reception.

'You must be very cold and tired,' said Lady Georgiana; 'will you come to your room?'

Anna followed her up-stairs into a nice roomy bedroom, in which a large fire was blazing and a tea-kettle singing briskly.

'I hope you will find everything comfortable here,' said Lady Georgiana. 'Should you want anything, you have only to ring, and your maid will come at once. The same servant will wait on you and the children, and she is wholly under your control. Would you just like to look at your schoolroom and the children's room whilst we are here, that you may be put *au courant* at once?'

They went out into the broad, airy corridor, and into the room adjoining Anna's bedroom. It was a large, cheerful sitting-room, with no schoolroom air, save the pleasant atmosphere of books, maps, and pictures. There was a nosegay of hothouse flowers on the table, and a bright fire in the grate.

'The children gathered these, and arranged them for you this morning,' said Lady Georgiana; 'they have been very anxious about you.'

Into the corridor again, and thence to another large bedroom.

'This is the children's bedroom; and this next room their playroom, and the maid's sitting-room. Whenever you want half-an-hour's leisure you can send them here. I have perfect confidence in Ruth, their attendant; and am, besides, a great deal with them myself. And now we will return to your own apartment. I have ordered high tea for you, instead of dinner, because I think it is so much pleasanter after a journey, and the children are so anxious to have their tea with us.'

Anna could do nothing but look shy, pleased, tearful, and grateful. Words would not come to express her thanks. She had expected to find matters so cold and cheerless amongst the grand people to whom she was going, and, on the contrary, all was so warm and cheerful.

'And now,' said Lady Georgiana, lingering near the fireplace and leaning her elbow on the mantelpiece, 'I wish you, Miss Burton, to make yourself at home here. We live very quietly, and see little company, but we all live together. Our hours are early, and my mother's advanced age and health require regularity, so we are regular people. When lessons are over, we shall be always glad to have you with us. The children have been accustomed to be so much in our society that they are quite little old women, and would feel greatly being shut out from it. They were only reconciled to regular school by the promise that they might spend their play-hours with grandmamma when they chose.'

The tears that had been gathering in Anna's bright eyes now fairly rolled down her cheeks,—tears of genuine gratitude from the orphan. Such tears you may command at will, all ye mothers of families, who receive young ladies into your homes and hearts, instead of into your schoolrooms and service.

'I will do my best for your children,' was all that Anna could say; and the simple words were all that Lady Georgiana asked.

Anna, like most of her sex, had a heart sensible to kindness. She could be led to anything by such words as she had heard, such gentle manners as she had seen. Yes, 'gentlewoman' indeed was Lady Georgiana Meredith. Would that all the high-born women of the world deserved the title so well, and bore it so meekly!

Whilst Anna is left alone to wipe her eyes, arrange her dress, and ponder over the kind reception she has had from the relatives of Chatham Michelson, let us return again to the handsome drawing-room she has left, and give a hasty sketch of its two noble-minded inmates.

The Dowager Countess of Loughlow, who sits in the large

velvet high-backed chair, is the widow of an Irish earl. Her husband died some twenty or thirty years ago, leaving her with two daughters, one arrived at marriageable age, the other not more than ten years old. He had been an extravagant man, and therefore, beyond her own property of a thousand a year, settled on herself and her children, she had nothing. The title and estates passed to a cousin of the earl's. She went abroad with her daughters, and resided there some years. Her eldest daughter married Mr. Michelson shortly after. The match appeared a good one, as Lady Charlotte had nothing during her mother's life, and Mr. Michelson was a man of large fortune, and supposed to be of considerable talent. It was not a happy match, and caused the good Countess much grief. About ten years afterwards, and not very long before Lady Charlotte's death, her other daughter, Lady Georgiana, married Sir Thomas Meredith, a Welsh baronet, also a man of wealth, and, what was far better, of genuine worth. The Countess came into Wales, and resided with her daughter and son-in-law, who were as united and happy a couple as ever graced either palace or cottage. Soon after the birth of little Rose, Sir Thomas Meredith died, leaving his wife sole mistress of all he possessed in the world. Since that melancholy period—the one great, black, never-vanishing cloud in the life of Lady Georgiana —the mother and daughter devoted themselves to each other, and to the little Violet and Rose. The aged Countess had gone through unnumbered trials during her lifetime. She lost a son and daughter, born between the two surviving children ; she had a wild, extravagant, faithless husband ; she saw one daughter married to a selfish, heartless man, and neglected until she died of a broken heart ; and finally she lost a son-in-law, dear to her as if he had been her own son. But she never repined ; she sorrowed, but not as one without hope.

Very beautiful is that aged gentlewoman. We will not pause to convince the sceptic in such matters, that age may be beautiful, but simply describe her. A face, colourless as the marble mantelpiece near which she sits,—somewhat wrinkled, doubtless, but the wrinkles have not disfigured it ; a thin, marked nose ; a calm, high brow ; thin, pale lips, at the corners of which a soft smile always dwells, like a moonbeam on a white cloud ; eyes yet undimmed by fifty years of tears,—soft, sweet, melancholy, yet beaming brown eyes, telling of holy thoughts, gentle sympathies, untold loves and untold griefs ; two bands of white hair, unshaded by a single streak of brown, binding the pale, placid forehead, like snow around a winter rose. A cap of rich white lace, simple in form, but graceful, surrounds

that face, and covers a portion of that silver crown of honour. A black satin gown and large scarf edged with swan's-down clothes the venerable figure. Dignified, but not haughty, is the somewhat stately carriage; erect, but not formal, the still unbent form. Beautiful may have been the Countess in the first warm blush of her early summer, but never more beautiful than she is now, in the sun-illumined snows of her closing winter. Yes, such an old age is lovely, made lovely by the quiet Christian spirit that dwells within the calm frame.

Look at a pure white rosebud, just bursting from its green calyx, and you see the little Violet Meredith, now seated at her grandmother's feet. Watch the rose when it is full blown, pale, large, and sweet, and you see the Lady Georgiana. Mark, again, the flower when it is beginning to re-close, and one or two of its snowy petals have fallen, one or two have begun to wither, —and you see the Countess. A shade more sorrowful than of old is the Lady Georgiana's pale, sweet face; a degree less erect her graceful figure; for when she lost the husband who was more to her than life itself, she lost the brightness of her smile and the elasticity of her mien. But she gained that look of benign resignation,—of patient, heavenly meekness.

When Anna, radiant and bright as morning, entered the room, it was like a warm sunbeam striking in amongst the stars at night. As she turned the handle of the door, holding it, before she did so, nervously in her hand for some seconds, she heard a child's voice saying,—

'Grandmamma, she is so pretty! Did you see her black eyes and rosy cheeks, mamma? Oh, I love her very much already.'

Poor Anna's heart beat with more real pleasure at the child's praise than it had ever done at a compliment before.

'Violet, put Miss Burton's chair here, by the fire,' said Lady Georgiana, glancing at Anna, as she drew, trembling and shy, towards the tea-table, which was supplied with all kinds of good things, and at which Lady Georgiana was presiding.

The Countess looked up from a book she had in her hand, and smiled as she caught Anna's eye. Anna thought she saw a look of Chatham, and the colour came to her cheeks. Tea passed over, and they were all seated round the fire, before there was much conversation. Little Rose managed to place her low stool very near Anna's side, and by degrees looked up into her face when she spoke, and manœuvred to touch her dress, until the small hand rested on the lap, and finally found its way into hers.

When the children were gone to bed, the principal part of the

conversation was about them. Lady Georgiana told Anna of their dispositions, tastes, and of her own plans for their improvement and happiness. These were so judicious, and evidently had been so long and anxiously considered, that Anna had nothing to do but to listen, and to resolve to follow them to her best ability. With a frankness natural to her, and called forth by Lady Georgiana's confidential tone, Anna said that she had not been used to teaching; that she had the art, for a great and noble art it is, to learn from the beginning; and that she hoped Lady Georgiana would assist her in arranging the studies of her children.

If all mothers, like the Lady Georgiana, met their governess kindly, easily, and frankly, as a lady, and, to a certain extent, an equal, they would find her anxious to help them in carrying out their plans, as well as in making and arranging their own. Had Anna been met proudly and haughtily, by one inconsiderate for her happiness and comfort, she would have set to work proudly and haughtily. She would have been angry if the Lady Georgiana had interfered in her department. She would have resolutely shown that she knew what she was about as well as an experienced teacher of forty, whether she knew or not; she would have looked coldly on the children, even though they were sweet and loveable, of one who looked coldly upon her. She was of good family, admired for her beauty, highly educated, somewhat spoiled, and differing in nothing from any other handsome and fashionable young lady, save in the fact that she was beginning a career not very well suited to her taste. The Lady Georgiana took the only means of making it palatable. She showed that she did not consider the position of a governess an inferior one, —on the contrary, one to be respected. She joined heart and hand in the plans for her children's education: she did not command, she suggested, and suggested in such a way that it was evident to Anna that she was not expected, as a matter of course, to abide by the suggestions, if her own plans and wishes were different.

Anna listened meekly, spoke little, but resolved. She did more towards becoming a teacher in that short evening than she had ever done before; and when she retired for the night, instead of thinking of Chatham Michelson, or even overmuch of home, she found herself meditating seriously on Lady Georgiana's words and wishes, and, for the first time in her life, trying to lay down rules for instructing others.

The following morning Anna rose with the very late sun, and dressed quickly, for she understood that they were to breakfast at half-past eight. She stood in the window, gazing on the prospect,

waiting for some kind of summons from some one, not knowing whether she was to breakfast with the children or with the heads of the household. Before her lay a long expanse of smooth lawn, winding shrubberies, and magnificent trees. Through an opening in the trees a line of sea was visible, and a blue mountain. The house must have been three miles from the sea, but there it lay, tranquil and glorious, beneath the morning sun. Anna had never seen a mountain before she came into Wales, and now she bowed her heart before its grandeur. She stood as one entranced, touched to the soul by the tranquil beauty of nature.

A soft tapping at the door, frequently repeated before she even heard it, at last aroused her. She opened it, and the little pupils appeared, each with a nosegay of the first snowdrops and laurestinus.

'Breakfast is ready,' said Violet, after the morning salutations.

'Here are some flowers, if you please,' said Rose, presenting her bouquet.

'Thank you, dears,' said Anna, taking the flowers from the children, and placing some of the snowdrops in her bosom. 'Shall we have time to put them in water?'

'May I do it?' asked Violet; and, receiving permission, she took a little vase from the mantelpiece, and began arranging them. 'We are to have a whole holiday to-day; and mamma says that, if you like, we may show you our ponies and gardens, and take you for a long walk.'

'There is the bell,' said Rose. 'We have prayers first, if you please.'

The servants were all in the hall, as, with a little girl on each side, Anna passed through them into the dining-room. They followed her and the children.

Lady Georgiana was seated with a book before her. She pointed to chairs near her, which Anna and the children took. The servants sat down, a goodly array, at the bottom of the room. Lady Georgiana then read a few verses of Scripture, and a short explanation of them, simply worded; then an impressive short prayer, during which all, of course, knelt; and when every voice had joined in our Lord's Prayer, and she had concluded by the blessing, they again separated. Anna had felt a greater degree of solemnity during that quarter of an hour than she had ever felt before. Her heart was often reached through her senses; and the subdued light in the fine old library, the row of respectable servants, the quiet, high-bred children, and, above all, the Lady Georgiana's deep voice and reverent manner, had touched both her senses and feelings.

Lady Georgiana shook hands kindly with her, and made inquiries as to the night she had passed, etc. She said that her mother always breakfasted in her own apartments, but joined them at the other meals. They went into a cheerful little breakfast-room, where a good fire and a hissing urn made the frame glow and the eyes brighten. Lady Georgiana at the top of a small table, and Anna at the bottom, with a child on each side, made up a little party well suited to the room.

The children looked impatient as soon as breakfast was over.

'Miss Burton must have many things to arrange, my dears,' said their mother, 'and we must not forget that we have one duty to perform; holidays do not exempt us from that pleasant duty.'

'O no, mamma,' said Violet cheerfully, whilst little Rose looked disappointed.

'May Miss Burton read with us, mamma?' said Rose, brightening up.

'Ask her, dear,' said her mother, smiling.

'Will you read the Psalms and chapters with us?' asked the child, going up softly to Anna.

'I should like it very much,' said Anna, 'if your mamma has no objection.' And so it was settled, and so it continued as long as Anna was with them.

They all went up-stairs, and into a pretty morning-room, where they found the Countess, in a warm dressing-gown, seated in an easy-chair. She welcomed Anna, and told her she was very glad to have her join their little party. The children took two cases, containing a Bible and Prayer Book (presents of their grandmother), from a low shelf, and sat down on two little stools at her feet. The Lady Georgiana gave Anna a third case, and, taking her own Bible and Prayer Book, seated herself on an ottoman by the fire. As Anna leaned her elbow on a small table and opened the sacred books, her black curls concealed the one bright tear that rolled down her cheek, for again she thought of Jessie. The Countess began the first verse of the Psalms for the day, and then they read by turns, the children joining as gravely and attentively as the rest. Anna felt that it was 'good.'

After they had finished this devotional exercise, Anna gave herself up to the children. They took her to see their various pets and treasures; they led her through beautiful shrubberies, by romantic streams, across rustic bridges, along the edge of a mimic lake, in which was their own mimic island, through grand but leafless woods, and finally to the little church in the grounds. Everywhere there were glimpses of the sea and mountains. The

children said they often rode down to the shore, and that Miss Burton was to have a pony to ride with them.

'There is Mr. Lewis Gwynne,' said Rose, clapping her hands.

'Oh, come on, if you please, I don't like him,' said Violet.

But Mr. Lewis Gwynne, a pale young clergyman, with a vast extent of white necktie, stopped to speak to the children. He raised his hat to Anna, and, with a very self-possessed and somewhat self-satisfied air, said, 'Miss Burton, I presume?'

Anna bowed and walked on. She was not particularly struck by Mr. Lewis Gwynne, curate of Llanayron. He stood looking after her. 'What a fine girl!' he said to himself. Mr. Lewis Gwynne was convinced he should soon make a conquest.

With a heightened colour and good appetite Anna returned to dinner at two o'clock. Dinner, like everything else, was conducted in excellent style. All was as well cooked, and the servants waited as attentively, as if it had been at eight,—only there was no time lost: they dined, and there was an end of it. A modern luncheon would have occupied as long a period.

After dinner Anna went to arrange her room and to write to Jessie. Then Lady Georgiana and she had an hour's conversation about lessons in the schoolroom, when many important scholastic matters were arranged to their mutual satisfaction. After this, Anna showed Lady Georgiana some of her drawings, amongst which was a sketch that Charles had made for her, of Jessie, with Tiny on her lap.

'Who is that?' she asked; 'what a calm, sweet expression, and what a lovely child!'

Anna was delighted to be able to say that it was her elder sister, and that her brother had drawn it.

Then Lady Georgiana questioned her kindly of her family, and finally ran off with the picture and Anna's drawings to her mother.

After tea they had some music. Anna really played and sang brilliantly, and her auditors were much pleased. Then the little girls played a duet that their mamma had taught them; and so the evening slipped away till the children went to bed. Then the Countess took her knitting, and Anna fetched her work-box,—she who had hated all kinds of work. But work, or make-believe to work, she did, whilst the Lady Georgiana read aloud Wordsworth's *Excursion*, which Anna tried to admire, but found herself insensibly thinking of something else.

'I think you know Mr. Michelson, Miss Burton?' said the Countess, with a twitch in the corners of her mouth.

'Yes,' replied Anna, with considerable hesitation, 'I have met him occasionally.'

'And my grandson, Captain Michelson, do you know him?'

'I met him at Sir Thomas Mansford's,' she stammered, 'a short time before I left home.'

'He does not stay much at the Hall, I believe, does he?' asked Lady Georgiana.

'I think not; but I have been so much at school that I scarcely know.'

'Does his father live much in the country?'

'I believe not; I have never seen him there more than twice or three times.'

'Is Captain Michelson reckoned like his father?' asked the Countess; 'I have not seen him for some years.'

'No—yes—not very much,' said Anna.

'Was Chatham much with the Mansfords?' asked Lady Georgiana. 'We used to be very intimate with Lady Mansford some years ago, but our correspondence dwindled, until she was kind enough to write to me about you.'

'Mr. Michelson seemed to be on very intimate terms with Sir Thomas Mansford,' said Anna, evading the question.

'Chatham was a very handsome youth,' sighed the Countess, 'and very affectionate. Now his letters are so hurried that I scarcely know what he is. Is he much liked, Miss Burton, in the county?'

Poor Anna! She could with difficulty bring out that 'I believe so.'

'Is Mr. Michelson still as popular in society as he was?' asked the Lady Georgiana, with some hesitation.

'He appears to be so,' said Anna.

The Countess fidgeted with her knitting, and moved nervously on her chair, then, as by a great effort, said, 'Do you know what became of Miss Rutherford?'

Anna told all she knew, which was simply the report of her sudden departure from the Hall.

'Chatham used to be very fond of her,' said Lady Georgiana. 'She was very clever and handsome. There was a curious likeness of her in that child's face your brother sketched.'

'How strange!' said Anna, 'my sister once remarked that likeness.'

'Did your sister know her?'

'They used to meet now and then in the cottages of poor people. Miss Rutherford was very good to the poor. I believe they became rather intimate in that way, and sometimes walked together. My sister liked her very much.'

'Is Captain Michelson generous?' asked the pertinacious Countess.

'Very, I believe, to a fault,' said Anna, with animation, forgetting herself for a moment in her wish to praise Chatham.

'I am thankful that he has not lost that,' said the Countess aside to Lady Georgiana.

'I daresay we shall see him some day, mamma,' said Lady Georgiana cheerfully, seeing the Countess look despondent. 'Young men, when they get into the army, have so much to occupy their minds, that one cannot expect them to visit quiet people till they sober down a little.'

'Perhaps so,' said the Countess sadly, and rang the bell.

They went into the library, where the servants came in the same order as in the morning; and, having had family prayers, they retired for the night.

CHAPTER XIX.

'See your guests approach;
Address yourself to entertain them sprightly,
And let's be red with mirth.'—*Winter's Tale.*

ANNA'S presence at Plas Ayron was as pleasant and beneficial to its inmates as their society and example were to her. When she became at home,—which in the course of a few weeks she did,—her bright face, and gay, cheerful temper, animated manners, and brilliant conversation, were the means of rousing all, even the pensive Lady Georgiana, into occasional sallies of mirth that had been long foreign to the house. We have said that Anna was irresistible, and this is another proof of the truth of the assertion. The children loved her, and decidedly petted her, as did the Countess. As to the servants, they entirely spoiled her. They declared the house was more itself since she had been there than it had been since their master's death; and the serious old butler said she was the prettiest, merriest, and most ladylike governess he had ever seen in all his service.

Under the joint efforts of Lady Georgiana and Anna, the children got on famously. They were not forced,—their mother was too judicious for that; she did not like hothouse plants as well as garden ones,—but they were regularly taught, and with good temper. This was due to their mother. Her unvaried kindness to Anna, her ready approval of all her little efforts, her desire to make her happy, awoke such gratitude in the girl's nature, always warm and impressionable, that she forced her

quick temper into subjection, and urged her patience into action, that she might repay the debt she felt she was incurring. She was not by nature fond of children; she did not like teaching; but no one who saw her would have supposed so. It will be readily understood that such a discipline and the intercourse with minds superior in mental culture to her own, greatly benefited Anna. Day after day passed with little variety, but each day helped to inform her heart, and to teach her that there was something even more beautiful than beauty,—the quiet refinement of the cultivated Christian mind. She forgot—almost forgot—her love of admiration. She did not forget Chatham Michelson and his admiration. Once she heard the Countess express great pleasure at having received a letter of some length and much good feeling from him, and this made her heart beat. She was constant to him,—but then she had few temptations to inconstancy.

Mr. Lewis Gwynne was the only one with whom she could, if she would, carry on a little flirtation, *pour passer le temps*, and she did not consider him worth the trouble. She tormented him a good deal, and made him declare that she gave herself more airs than the Lady Georgiana,—she! only a governess! Yet he was as near being in love as he could be with a girl who had not a *sou*. He did not know that she was to have a thousand pounds screwed out of poor Fairfield if she married, or he might have permitted himself to fall in love. He preached high-flown sermons, which she, to the Countess's displeasure, cut to pieces when she came from church, as she did his white neckcloth and long hair. But he rather deserved cutting to pieces, it must be confessed, for he was the least bit in the world of a prig.

Anna decided upon having no holidays at midsummer, because the distance from her home was so great, and she had been so short a time away from it. She might have had them if she liked, and truly she longed to see Fairfield and its dear inmates again; but a vague hope that Chatham Michelson might make a tour of Wales during his next leave of absence, and that the leave might be in the summer, and that he might come to see his grandmother, which he had rather hinted he wished to do, decided her wavering mind, and she put off visiting her friends for another year. Holidays she had, during which she and the children made hay, wandered about the sea-shore on ponyback and on foot, went for long drives and morning calls with the Lady Georgiana, pulled the Countess about the walks in her wheel-chair, and almost lived out of doors.

One splendid July evening they were all to have a *fête champêtre* under the trees amongst the hay. There was a fine

group of oaks far down in the park, close by a foaming stream, that rushed over rocks and beneath rocks down into the calm river Ayron that flowed below. Hither the servants had brought chairs and tables, and every imaginable luxury in the shape of fruits, preserves, creams, cakes, etc., all laid out in most tempting order. The Lady Georgiana had entered into the spirit of the thing, and the children and Anna were wild with pleasure; even the Countess was excited by the gaiety. A family of neighbouring children were invited for the occasion, and an elder brother and sister were to bring them.

Just let us watch the scene: it is a pretty one. Grandly the gnarled, brawny branches of the huge old centenarians of oaks stretch their leafy canopy of brilliant green over the new-mown emerald carpet beneath. Perseveringly, but in vain, the impudent, unblushing, broad-faced sun tries to peer through them at what is going on below. No sooner does his glance penetrate half-way down the screen, than a great arm flings out fresh foliage to intercept it, and thus baffles his impertinent curiosity. Upon a cushion on the ground beneath the trees, the Lady Georgiana sits, with a book in her hand, expecting the rest of her party. Servants are moving to and fro, busy and smiling, arranging and rearranging the feast. By the side of the trees the bullying braggart of a stream brawls on its way, impotently dashing itself against the large rocky stones, or foaming over the branches of trees and briers that droop into it. All around, the haymakers in their picturesque Welsh costume, are grouped at various distances,—now resting a moment on their rakes or forks to look furtively at their unusual guests,—now busily, and sometimes gracefully, drawing along the fresh, sweet hay in the long prongs of the rake. Away between the opening in those two high woods, you see the ocean basking in the sun like a huge golden fish, and flanked on one side by the blue mountain, tipped with gold, that looks as if he were going to bathe in the orient sky. The sun is yet high up in the vast arch above, and seems resolved never to give place to any less heating influence; for the breezes are frightened away by his intense rays, and linger shyly amongst the trees,—the only receptacles of freshness. Shade, delicious shade! how attractive you are to the toiling labourers, burning beneath the heat! how attractive to the merry birds, more fortunate than the labourers, for they have leisure to sing and make holiday within your dominions! how attractive to the weary cattle, languidly reclining beneath your influence!

And not less attractive to the venerable Countess and her attendant nymphs, now rapidly drawing near to you. Seated in her garden-chair, a large silk umbrella over her head, she is

triumphantly wheeled along, her two little grandchildren pulling before, and Anna pushing behind. Just as they are about to leave the drive and cross the greensward, they perceive a gentleman approach, and wonder who he is.

'It must be Mr. Lewis Gwynne,' says Violet.

'Or Mr. Jenkinson, who is coming with Mary and Janet,' suggests Rose.

'No, he would wait for his sisters,' says grandmamma.

Anna gazes fixedly into the distance. Nearer the gentleman approaches, and nearer,—a fine, tall figure, and good carriage. He quickens his pace. Anna starts—turns pale—turns red—hides herself behind the chair—changes her purpose, and comes in front, and says with embarrassment,—

'It is—I think it is Captain Michelson.'

The Countess suddenly rises from the seat, steps from the chair, and in a few moments has her arms round the neck of her grandson, and is fondly embraced by him. Tears fill her eyes as she gazes on the young man, and it is some seconds before she recovers herself. Seeing this strange meeting from a distance, the Lady Georgiana walks towards the group. Meanwhile, with equal confusion on both sides, Anna and Chatham have shaken hands, and the little girls have been presented to their cousin. Chatham, seeing the feast under the trees yonder by the brook, insists on wheeling his grandmother towards it; but she declares the sight of him has given her such strength that she will walk, and, leaning on his arm, followed by Anna and the children, they advance to meet the Lady Georgiana. Suddenly a carriage full of young people drives up, and stops opposite our group. The young people get out, and in a few minutes Mr. Lewis Gwynne is seen. All the dispersed party unite in the middle of the large hay-field, and walk together towards the trees, the Countess leaning on her grandson.

In due course of time they reach the scene of their festivities, and seat themselves, some on chairs, others on the trunks of the trees or new-mown grass, forming a pretty picture. Anna helps Lady Georgiana to pour out tea and coffee, and looks, in her broad-brimmed garden hat, not unlike the Daphnes and Chloes of pastoral times. Of course the gentlemen make themselves useful, and flit about from Lady Georgiana to Anna, with warm water, cups and saucers, and all kinds of edibles, whilst the happy children fly here, there, and everywhere, and look like so many fairies dancing and sporting on the greensward.

'I fear you are not well, my dear Miss Burton?' said the Countess to Anna. 'I am sure it was bad for you to draw me all the way from the house in the hot sun. You look so flushed,

and you have thrown off your mantle; that is dangerous when you are heated. Chatham, will you take Miss Burton her mantle, and beg her to put it on?'

'No, really,—thank you,—I am quite well,' said Anna, drawing back as Chatham approached.

'Pray allow me,' said he, holding up the light white muslin cloak; 'you may take cold, though I scarcely know how this can keep you warm.'

Again their eyes met. Anna turned away, and Chatham, throwing the mantle over her shoulders, returned to his grandmother's side, looking vexed. Anna made innumerable blunders in the matter of cream and sugar, and her attendant swains found her so reserved and unlike herself, that each asked himself what could be the matter.

'Have I been so unfortunate as to offend you, Miss Burton?' asked Mr. Lewis Gwynne in an undertone, as he took a cup of tea from her hand.

'Offend me? How?' asked Anna, looking surprised at the question.

'I do not know how, but your manner is so unusually constrained this evening.'

'Worshipped as usual,' half-whispered Captain Michelson, as he too came for some tea for Miss Jenkinson. '"Out of sight, out of mind," is the general motto of ladies.'

'And of gentlemen also,' replied Anna, hastily bending over the teapot.

'Janet would like some strawberries and cream, if you please, Miss Burton,' interrupted Violet, putting her hand on Anna's shoulder.

'Let me mix the strawberries and cream, and you carry that cup of tea to the young lady, little cousin,' said Chatham, seating himself on the grass at Anna's feet, with a plate of fruit on his lap.

'Chatham! what are you doing?' cried the Countess from her seat under the largest of the oaks.

'Mixing strawberries and cream for little Janet,' replied Chatham. 'Who *is* little Janet?' he continued, addressing Rose.

'I will fetch her;' and the child ran off, returning soon with a rosy, curly-headed pet, that Chatham placed by his side, and to whom he gave the plate he had filled.

'I am so thankful he is not altered,' said the Countess to her daughter. 'See how nice he is to Miss Burton and the children.'

'And so handsome,' said the Lady Georgiana, not insensible

to her nephew's good looks, however insensible she might have been to those of other men.

What deceptions do we not practise upon ourselves and upon each other during our lives, particularly the first half of them! How many of us go to visit aged grandmothers, aunts, cousins, friends, with the avowed dutiful purpose of compassionating their rheumatism, and amusing their old age, whilst we have a secret eye to some comfortable legacy, fine estate, household furniture and plate, or maybe to the good sporting on the manor, or the still more amusing sporting within doors, as in Chatham's case!—some pretty cousin, a companion, or cousin's governess, or some nice friend in the neighbourhood, not to be met under other circumstances! And how blindly and kindly the good old gentleman or lady looks on, winking good-naturedly at the real facts of the case, and pretending to see the ostensible ones! The Countess knows that her grandson cannot come to visit her for the sake of her money, because half of it will be his at her death; but she does not know that the blushing and beautiful Anna Burton was nearly becoming her grand-daughter, and is the attraction that draws the weathercock of a Chatham to Plas Ayron. And who would wish to undeceive the dear lady? Certainly not her grandson; certainly not Anna: they would not be so cruel. Who would desire to be undeceived under such circumstances? Woe to that man who, dwelling in the 'Palace of Truth,' can look into the heart of his friend! He must inevitably quarrel with him directly; for where is the friend who could bear to have all his thoughts scrutinized,—the Orestes who considers his Pylades perfect? where, to return from ancient to modern examples, the military grandson who would devote a leave of absence to his grandmother?

'Who is that prig of a parson, my dear grandmother?' said Chatham later on, eyeing Mr. Lewis Gwynne, who was assiduously talking to Anna.

'You remember our old rector, Mr. Gwynne?' was the reply; 'he is his son, and the living is kept for him until he takes priest's orders. He is very good-natured; we think he has lost his heart.'

'He seems a confounded fool!' said Chatham.

The Countess opened her eyes.

'My dear boy!'

'I beg your pardon, grandmother, but I have a great aversion to parsons with huge white neckties,—they always remind me of those pigeons with ruffs; and that fellow is so awfully conceited. How can Miss Burton bear to listen to him?'

'It would be a very suitable match in many ways, though certainly in point of manners and appearance she is very superior,' said the Countess.

'Yes, and in family and everything else,' exclaimed Chatham. 'The Burtons are an excellent old family—as good as any in Somersetshire.'

'Cousin Chatham,' here interrupted Violet, kneeling down at the bottom of the bank on which the Countess and Chatham were sitting, 'will you help us to dance a quadrille? Mamma says we may under the trees in that nice smooth place.'

'Do, my dear,' said the Countess. 'Do not mind me; I shall be delighted to look at you.'

In a few minutes they were all dancing, and Chatham exhausting himself by humming quadrille tunes the while, in which Anna, compassionating his condition, occasionally assisted.

CHAPTER XX.

'I know not how, but martial men are given to love; I think it is but as they are given to wine; for perils commonly ask to be paid in pleasures.'—BACON'S ESSAYS.

CHATHAM managed to exist for more than a month at Plas Ayron. He insisted on no alteration being made, either in the hours or occupations of the family, on his account; so that, after the first day, all went on quietly and regularly as usual.

It would have diverted some of his army friends to have seen him dining at two o'clock and drinking tea at six, reading aloud of an evening, or wandering about with his little cousins and Anna; to have watched his devotion to his grandmother, and his attention to his aunt, his care of certain Welsh ponies on which Anna and the children were wont to ride, and his frequent visits to the schoolroom, to make inquiries and arrangements respecting the said ponies. They would have voted him a domestic character at once, and would have begun to inquire what could have made the gay and somewhat dissipated Captain Michelson so steady and well-behaved. And they would not have been alone in their inquiries; the Lady Georgiana would have joined them. With all her placidity, she had a quick perception of the motives of those around her, and read character well. So did her mother, when not personally interested in those she studied. The following conversation may illustrate this difference between the parent and child. They were alone

in the Countess's boudoir when it took place, Chatham, Anna, and the children having gone on an evening's pony expedition to the sea-shore.

'Surely, my dear mother, you cannot be so blind!' said the Lady Georgiana, in a voice, for her, somewhat elevated.

'I see nothing, my love, but the proper civility and politeness that are due from a gentleman to a lady, and that, in my younger days, every gentleman paid, and every lady received, as a matter of course. I am delighted to see that Chatham is above his generation in the present case, as some young men might rather eschew paying attention to a lady in Miss Burton's position.'

'But can you not perceive that Chatham is never at his ease—never himself—except when he is in Miss Burton's presence? He is certainly always kind and gentlemanlike; but when does he sit an hour at a time either with you or me, without finding some excuse for going to the children? He has faithfully promised Violet this thing, or he must do the other for Rose. When driving alone with us, he is absent, or anxiously inquiring how long our visit to such and such a neighbour will last; but if Miss Burton is of the party, the drive can scarcely be too long. I will say this for him, he is a very bad dissembler.'

'My dear Georgiana, I never knew you so severe. I am only glad that he finds amusement, and is kept so long amongst us. I think he is naturally fond of children, and Violet and Rose are charming, everybody says. Of course Miss Burton, beautiful, accomplished, and agreeable, is an attraction, but not in the way you mean, I am convinced.'

'At all events it is dangerous for her; you allow that he is very attentive. There is no reason that she should not attribute his attentions to the right cause,—at least to what I consider the right cause; and if, after all, he does, as you say, mean nothing, the disappointment to her may be great.'

'Depend upon it, Miss Burton has been too much accustomed to admiration all her life to give more weight to it than it deserves. Look at her reception of Lewis Gwynne's very evident devotion.'

'Strange, dearest mother, that you can perceive in an indifferent person what you cannot discover in one so near to you. Your argument may be easily turned against yourself. Miss Burton is wholly uninterested in Mr. Lewis Gwynne; but if you watch narrowly, you will not see the same indifference towards Chatham. She certainly behaves admirably,—much more discreetly than I should have supposed she would have done,—still the blushes and frequent confusion tell tales.'

'Young ladies are always blushing, my dear; that is no criterion.' The Countess spoke with slight irritability.

'Try Chatham, mother; young military men are not given to blushing, yet I have seen him blush like a girl when you spoke of Mr. Lewis Gwynne and Miss Burton. I assure you some stop must be put to it.'

'We put a stop to your sister's first attachment because the lover was not rich enough; she married Mr. Michelson, and was miserable for life. God forbid that I should have the sin of making her only son miserable in the same way! I wash my hands of everybody's attachments, and have done so ever since. Let them run their natural course,—live or die as God appoints. Not that I see any reason to fear on the present occasion.'

'His father would never consent to such a thing; you know he is hard as iron.'

'Harder, harder! You can make something of iron; yes, so you could of him,—polish him into steel, which is harder still. I should have a wicked satisfaction in circumventing him. Chatham hinted the other night that he wanted him to marry Miss Erskine.'

'My dear mother! that is not like you. We must love our enemies, and return good for evil.'

'He was the death of my child,—a slow, cruel, wearing death.' The Countess was getting excited.

'Do you think there would be any harm in my speaking to Chatham, mother, as his nearest relative and most interested friend?'

'There could be no harm; but beware of putting into his head notions that would not otherwise come there.'

'He is not quite so innocent as that. If he is not serious, he is flirting with Miss Burton, and that we ought not to allow; she is under our protection, and we stand in the light of her guardians.'

'You are right, my love; but I am sure Chatham is the soul of honour.'

'All young men are till they are tempted; but henceforth just watch them with the new eyes I have kindly given you, and then let me know whether you do not change your opinion.'

'Be it so, my dear. And now let us go and look after them; I shall be on the *qui vive* from this time forth.'

Whilst the Countess and her daughter were thus discussing their respective merits, Chatham and Anna were seated on a piece of rock, watching the flowing of the tide. The children were gathering pebbles and seaweed not far off, and the ponies were quietly picking such bits of grass as the interstices of the

rocks afforded. Conversation had been animated between the pair on the rocks, but there was a pause. Annabella's eyes were fixed on the advancing waves; Chatham's were gazing into hers, as if to read the meaning beneath their proud, defiant glance.

'But if my father would consent,—if I had the means,' began Chatham, with hesitation.

'You know he never will consent,' said Anna hastily, 'and that your means can only be increased by the death of your grandmother; and God grant her many more years to enjoy her own fortune.'

'Amen! I am sure I should be the last person in the world to wish to shorten them. But if you would only consent to an engagement, until times mend'—

'Until I am sick of teaching, and we are tired of one another, and finally break off the engagement because you find me grown old and ugly. That is not to my taste. Besides, do you think your father would consent to an engagement, if he would not consent to a union?'

'But—but—of course I did not mean him to know,—that would be madness.'

'And the Countess and Lady Georgiana, are they to be equally in the dark?' Miss Annabella was beginning to look dignified.

'Do you think yourself,—would it be advisable for them to be made acquainted with what was done in direct opposition to my father's wishes?'

'And do you think that I—a Burton, the daughter of one of the proudest and most particular men in the world—would stoop to remain here as governess, knowing that I am voluntarily practising a deceit upon the very family who are fostering me? I had hoped you knew me better.'

The tears sprang into Anna's eyes, and she attempted to rise, but Chatham detained her.

'Forgive me,—I am beside myself. I cannot bear to lose you; it is distraction,—and I know not what to propose. Can you—will you suggest anything, if indeed you really love me?'

Anna could have said, 'Sell your horses and dogs, part with some unnecessary superfluities, and marry me on your pay as captain,' but pride and propriety equally forbade the words, and, summoning all her resolution, she said proudly,—

'My only suggestion is that we part. This kind of torture is, at least, bad for me.'

'Part! and so coldly said!—and for you, perhaps, to marry another, and forget me as entirely as if you had never known me.'

'Perhaps so,—I cannot say; but I daresay not more entirely than you will manage to forget me.'

'May I not write to you? Is there no way of inducing you to wait until'— Chatham could not help seeing a kind of smile in the eyes of his tormentor, as he paused again on the word 'until.'

'Until your grandmother dies;—you may as well finish the sentence. No; I do not think I am very constant by nature; I am sure I should not be so were I chained for any indefinite period; and I do not think you are half as constant as I am. We are not a hero and a heroine, nor have we many of the heroic attributes,—at all events, I have not, and I will never promise what I may not, perhaps, perform. Besides, I do not choose to belong to any one whose family would not be proud to receive me amongst them. I am as good as any of you. Titles or money are not superior to a line of unblemished ancestors, gentlemen by birth and nature. I know how it is: your father was selfish,—you are selfish; you each want me just because you fancy me, but would not think me a good match for the other. I choose to be looked upon as equal by everybody, and would not stoop to a prince or an emperor.'

'What can you mean, Miss Burton?' said Chatham in evident astonishment. 'Have I done or said anything to merit such language?'

'I know what you all are,' cried Anna. 'You talk of equality as a matter of course; you say that talent equalizes—beauty refines—family ennobles; but you believe in nothing, act upon nothing, but money. Money! I hate the word. Family! yes, there is something grand in a good old family,—men and women who add lustre to one another's names, and become more glorious the longer their race exists;—but money! paltry gold, silver, or copper, dug out of the earth! I spurn it, and everybody that makes a god of it.'

As Anna uttered the last long speech, she rose from her seat and waved her hands in the excitement of the moment. The children, who had been induced at first by her raised voice and agitated manner to cease from their amusement, now imagined she was beckoning them towards her, and, approaching, effectually put a stop to all further conversation.

'We must return now,' she said impatiently, and, taking Violet's hand, proceeded towards the ponies.

Almost before Chatham could rise and follow, she had placed Violet on her pony and was herself mounted. Leaving him to manage for Rose, she cantered off, accompanied by Violet, who seemed much surprised at this mode of proceeding. They

scarcely ceased cantering until they reached the house, Chatham and Rose following more quietly. As they had two miles to ride, it is not surprising that they were reproached by the Lady Georgiana for the heated state of their ponies when they arrived; but Anna excused herself under the plea of having hurried home to answer a letter she had forgotten, and at once hastened to her room to execute the said letter. Her flushed and excited face and manner did not pass unnoticed by the Lady Georgiana, who asked Violet whether anything was the matter with Miss Burton.

'I do not know, mamma; but I think Cousin Chatham and she have been quarrelling,' said the child.

'What do you mean, love? That is not quite the way to speak of grown-up people.'

'Only we heard their voices rather loud from a distance, and saw Miss Burton leave Cousin Chatham in a hurry; and Cousin Chatham looked so surpri-ed! Oh, mamma, I do hope they have not quarrelled! They were such good friends always; and Rose and I want them to marry one another so very much.'

'Indeed! you settle matters very quickly. I daresay they have not quarrelled.'

'Oh! there are Cousin Chatham and Rose coming quite slowly. And there is the post-bag, mamma; may I take Miss Burton her letters?'

Lady Georgiana opened the post-bag, which the footman brought in, and speedily gave Violet a letter for Anna. The child flew with it to Anna's room.

'There is a letter from your sister, Miss Burton; I know her handwriting and the post-mark. Do not quarrel and be angry with poor Cousin Chatham, if you please, for I know he loves you very much.'

Anna stooped to kiss the child and brush off a tear; then whispering, 'Run away now, dear, I must read my letter,' was again alone.

She opened Jessie's letter and read it. Signs of impatience were occasionally manifested as she came upon the following passages:—

'And now, my dearest sister, let me tell you candidly what I think of your daily intercourse with Captain Michelson. It is most dangerous for you, and must require all your care and caution to prevent disagreeable results. It was, to say the least, selfish in him to subject you to this annoyance. Pray do not allow your feelings to get the better of your reason and common sense. Remember that whatever Captain Michelson may say, or however much he may work upon your feelings, he cannot marry whilst his father is against his doing so. Even if he were,

as you once suggested, to brave his father's anger, reduce his private expenditure, and marry you upon his own pay, what would be the consequences? For your own sake, as well as his, do not allow him to think of such a thing. If it is right that you should become his wife, circumstances will be so arranged by Divine Providence as to lead to that event; if not, I trust in God you may be strengthened to bear disappointment. Do not be angry at this sermon. I am so anxious about you, darling Anna. I know the temptation. I feel so much for you. If we had a mother to advise and take care of us, it might be easier for us to avoid temptations; but, left to ourselves, we must pray for guidance from above, and hold fast by one another. Even candour may keep us from some harm. I wish I were near you, to give you such advice and support as I am capable of, in this, for you, trying time. Endeavour not to let ambition, or a desire to emancipate yourself from your present duties, overcome your prudence. It is the first step that misleads. I can only commit you, as I do almost hourly, to the care of One who is the Father of the fatherless, and entreat you to give yourself up, with infantine humility, to His direction.'

Anna read the preceding extract more than once before she put the letter down; then murmured,—

'She does not know what it is to love, or she would not write thus of prudence and reason. I feel that I would marry him to-morrow, if he would run the risk; I could beg or starve with him. But, selfish and calculating as he is, he will give up nothing for me. Many captains marry. Pshaw! he might marry if he chose. I will not see him again, for he is simply amusing himself with me—with me! flirting, probably, with me! And Lady Georgiana suspects it. How glad I am that I never—no, never—told him that I loved him! I would rather put an end to my existence than let him suppose I care more for him than he does for me. Yes, I am almost sure he is trifling with me. As Jessie says, he had no right to come here, unless he could marry me. I will not speak to him again,—or I will be colder than ice,—or I will torment him by flirting with that odious Lewis Gwynne that the Countess wants me to marry,—or—or—I will just tell him calmly that I do not care for him,—and so have the satisfaction of mortifying him, at least.' And with this laudable resolution Anna burst into tears.

I suppose it is needless to say that Anna was most unjust. Captain Michelson was as honourable in his intentions towards her as he was undisguised in his attentions; but he had, as yet, self-command enough not to plunge himself and her into a labyrinth of difficulties, by marrying before he could support

her. He knew that he had rushed a great deal too far already; and the worst part of it was, that he would not, willingly, withdraw a step. He was, in short, as desperately smitten as even Anna could have wished.

Whilst Anna is aggravating her own feelings in the way we have described, the following conversation is going on between Chatham and the Lady Georgiana:—

'Have you offended Miss Burton, Chatham?' asked the latter. 'I thought she looked annoyed.'

'Upon my word, Aunt Georgy, I do not know. Ladies are so odd,—you are all so odd.'

'Will you forgive my putting a home question, Chatham? You are very much struck with Miss Burton; why do you pay her such constant attention?'

'You answer your question before you ask it, aunt; I suppose, because I am struck with her.'

'But, Chatham, is it quite right in you to devote yourself to her? Will it not raise notions that must be disappointed?'

'I hope not; I assure you I have no such intention. I have too great a respect for her and her family.'

'Did you know her before she came here as intimately as you seem to do now?'

'We had been acquainted about a month,—quite long enough to know most young ladies. I find three days sufficient generally; but I must honestly confess I do not know Miss Annabella Burton yet.'

'You like her, I should imagine?'

'Certainly; could any one avoid liking a handsome and agreeable young lady? You like her yourself; my grandmother likes her; the children like her; the servants like her; and assuredly Gwynne likes her. I hate singularity, so of course I like her too.'

'You are never serious, Chatham; this is not altogether a matter for jesting.'

'I am not jesting, upon my honour. I candidly say I like her; what would you have more?'

'What would *you* have more, Chatham, is the question?'

'Why,—let me consider,—I suppose, that she should like me; that is the next desirable point to be gained, is it not?'

'But if she were to like you too well?'

'Impossible; unless, indeed, you say, "Not wisely, but too well," which would be impolite on your part.' Chatham spoke with assumed carelessness, but it was evident to his aunt that he was troubled at heart. She continued with increased gravity,—

'My dear Chatham, will you allow me to presume on two

things?—first, on my being your aunt; and second, on my being, to a certain extent, Miss Burton's guardian and chaperon.'

'Speak freely to me, aunt. I really want some one to talk to who will advise me disinterestedly; not that I ever follow anybody's advice,—you must understand that before we begin.'

'Then allow me to say that, sorry as I should be to lose you, I think the sooner you rejoin your regiment the better.'

'A very cool way of telling your dearly-beloved nephew that you want to get rid of him.'

'For Miss Burton's sake, if not for your own.'

'For mine much more than hers. I assure you, I am the most vulnerable of mortals; unlike my military predecessor, Achilles, my heels are the only invulnerable part. I never take to my heels, but face the enemy,—fight it out, my dearest aunt.'

'That is wiser in war than love, Chatham.'

'*Au contraire*, all violent passions are alike: give them free vent, and you get rid of them; bottle them up, and they get rid of you. I give you an example:—I am a bottle; love is the champagne. Let off the cork discreetly, out sparkles the champagne,—it leaves the bottle by degrees; keep the cork in too long, it bursts the bottle,—pop! we die together, love and I, champagne and bottle.'

'But seriously, Chatham.'

'Seriously, aunt. You mean to infer that I am in love with Miss Burton, and she with me, or mutual? Quite true as regards your humble servant,—doubtful as regards the young lady. There! I have made a clean breast of it. Now I will anticipate all you have to say. My father will never consent; cut me off with a penny, or less—no penny at all. I know that; he has told me so already. My most excellent grandmother and charming aunt will highly disapprove, and bring forward frequent and numerous most convincing arguments to show the folly of my proceedings; my own small stock of prudence will rise up against me; and I shall be condemned on all sides. But now I must inform you that the young lady herself is the only influential opponent. She distinctly refuses to engage herself to me, either covertly or openly,—as far as I can understand, upon pride and principle both; and, seeing little probability of matters mending, she suggests the propriety of immediate separation. I tell you this that you may understand Miss Burton's conduct, and exculpate her from any designs on your graceless nephew. For my own part, I do not care who knows that I am sincerely attached to her, and would marry her to-morrow if I were not afraid of my father,—that is to say, if she would have me.'

'And the separation, Chatham?' asked the Lady Georgiana anxiously.

'I shall be compelled to part from you all, my dear aunt, to-morrow, unless you can get Dr. Jones to write me a sick certificate. I have been doing my best to sham illness, and I tell you honestly that I should either have broken my leg or painted myself red for scarlatina this very evening, if Miss Burton had been more encouraging. As it is, I suppose I must go.'

Chatham's gaiety was fairly ended when he came to the 'I suppose I must go,' and his face assumed an expression of such real pain and sorrow, that his aunt went up to him and put her hand affectionately on his shoulder.

'My dear Chatham, are you really so much distressed?' she asked.

'My dear aunt, we all have our little private feelings, and it is long since I have known the real kindness of relations. I am pained at bidding you all farewell.'

'But we should always be glad to see you; why not come oftener?'

'The truth is that when one is fairly in the world, and surrounded by its pleasures, one does not know how to get away from it. *Vogue la galère;* I shall be in it again to-morrow, heart and soul, I daresay, and forget all the good I have gained in this quiet place.'

'Chatham, how volatile you are! Can you never be serious five minutes at a time?'

'Ten, if you please, my dear aunt; and I never felt more serious in my life. If I keep in my present mind, I shall be like that famous king in English history—Henry the Second, I think it was—who never smiled after his son was drowned. I only hope I shall not come to such an untimely end; I believe he died of eating lampreys.'

'You make one laugh in spite of oneself, Chatham. There is one consolation in the matter,—you will never die of a broken heart.'

'Do not be too sure of that; just feel mine at this moment. It will at least prove to you the unsoundness of the fable that all lovers lose their hearts.'

Lady Georgiana placed her hand on her nephew's side, and started back when the rapid pulsation of his heart seemed to strike away the hand that would have restrained it.

'My dearest Chatham, what is the matter?' she exclaimed, much alarmed.

'It is always so when I am excited,' was the reply; 'Miss

Burton will have to answer for it, I suppose. But pray do not look so terrified. I am simply a sentimental young man, and subject to occasional palpitations. Does not that sound romantic? Now I am going to make myself fascinating, for a last *coup de main* on the obdurate fair one;' and thus speaking Chatham hastened from the room, looking very pale, and having succeeded in alarming the Lady Georgiana very much.

Shortly after the family party met at tea. The Countess was the only one of the elder branches who spoke or seemed as usual. They talked of Chatham's departure on the morrow, of which Anna had been previously apprised by him, and which had led to the conversation on the sea-shore. Chatham was grave and thoughtful, except when he occasionally exerted himself into unnatural sallies of gaiety, and Anna reserved and silent. The Lady Georgiana looked uneasily from one to the other, but read nothing in Anna's countenance but an increased degree of hauteur. She was angry with herself for feeling, for the first time, displeased with the beauty and grace of which she had before been an admirer. She wished, however, not to make known by her manner to Anna that she had become acquainted with Chatham's secret; and the effort to appear herself threw a restraint over her, which plainly indicated to Anna that she at least suspected it. This made Anna even colder and more distant to Chatham than she otherwise would have been.

The pair, who were really sincerely and disinterestedly attached to each other, parted that night with a cold touch of the fingers, which, whilst it almost broke their hearts, conveyed a lie, since it told to each of the carelessness and worldliness of the other, whilst in truth the affection and devotion of both had never been so fervent. God only knows how often loves and friendships have been severed for ever by the chill, loose grasp of the hand after some slight misunderstanding. The parting succeeds to the touch, cold and heartless; and the friends who a few hours before thought that they were firm as a rock, are perhaps divided as the rock by the earthquake, never again to be united.

CHAPTER XXI.

'Alas! they had been friends in youth;
But whispering tongues can poison truth,
And constancy lives in realms above,
And life is thorny, and youth is vain;
And to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness on the brain.'

COLERIDGE.

THE following morning Chatham left at daybreak. He was to meet the London mail at some distance, and was obliged to start early. His aunt was the only person up to see him off,—at least the only one down-stairs. He had gone to his grandmother's room, at her request, to bid her farewell, and in passing had run into his little cousins' sleeping apartments to give them a kiss, as they lay unconscious on their pillows. He had fancied that he heard sounds as of some one moving as he passed Anna's room, but dared not hope she had risen to see him again at that early hour. Whilst swallowing, at his aunt's request, a cup of coffee, he said, 'Do not, for my sake, allow what I have told you to influence your manner towards Miss Burton. She would be miserable if coldly treated; indeed, I am persuaded, would not remain with you a day. If there is fault anywhere, it is on my side. She has always been prudent. She will probably be glad when I am gone, as I feel that I have tormented her by proposing things that could never take place. I am the most unlucky fellow in existence. If I could only have fallen in love with Miss Erskine, I might have been, perhaps,—but never mind. Human nature has her own ways of teasing herself, and one of them is never to let her own flesh and blood fall in love with the desirable person. And now, God bless you! Write to me; and if you would only tell me if Miss Burton is well, or seems to care about my leaving, or'—

'I will not promise even to name her, Chatham, so you must not expect it.'

Chatham feigned to have left something up-stairs, for the purpose of passing once more the door of her he longed to see, muttered 'Fool that I am!' to himself, returned to the drawing-room, looked up the staircase, as if expecting to see an apparition when he re-entered the hall, and finally found himself in his aunt's open carriage. He kissed his hand to her as the coachman drove off, and on passing a certain bedroom window gazed earnestly up at it, and again kissed his hand. When he did so, however, he little thought that there was a tearful eye and an

anxious face looking upon him from behind the half-closed window-curtains. Anna was up and dressed. She perceived the wave of the hand, and, fearing that Chatham had seen her, hastily withdrew. The movement revealed a portion of her dress and hand to him, and he had the somewhat melancholy satisfaction of knowing that she must at least have been thinking of him.

From this time there was a change at Plas Ayron. Strange it is that love and lovers invariably bring changes. If it and they are happy, they are so engrossed in each other that everybody else is weary of them and wishing them fairly married and out of the way; if unhappy, they cast a gloom over the rest of the inmates of the house they are in, and an outer darkness over themselves. Thus Anna, being out of spirits herself, no longer enlivened her friends and pupils with the airy cheerfulness that had before characterized her. By fits and starts she was excited and apparently gay, always striving to appear so, and by striving only making her melancholy more apparent. She even flirted desperately with Lewis Gwynne, and almost contrived to convince the Countess that she liked him; until, to the surprise of everybody, he proposed, and received, to his own astonishment and indignation, a decided refusal. In vain the Countess pleaded the eligibility of the match, the living in prospect, the pleasure of having Anna for a neighbour; she only excited the ill-suppressed wrath of Anna, who, majestically waving her hand, inquired whether her ladyship really thought that she would marry a curate, and settle for life in a country parsonage, or worse, in a lodging in a farmhouse? So magnificent was she, that she quite put down the excellent Countess, who began to suspect there must be some truth in her daughter's view of the case. This conviction, however, only made her kinder than ever to Anna. That sacrifice of one dear daughter on the altar of Mammon, and her love for that daughter's son, kept her feelings acutely sensitive on all matters of the heart.

The Lady Georgiana did her best to show no change of manner to Anna. There was, however, a change,—scarcely a stiffness, scarcely a coolness, but a shade of distance and haughtiness that would have been imperceptible in any one less free from pride, both by nature and self-discipline, than she was. Anna perceived it, and grew reserved, and ten times as haughty in return.

In the course of some months it was evident that her health was failing, as well as her spirits. She required excitement, and with Chatham had disappeared all that was excitable. The monotony of her life began to weary her: she longed for home,

for change: she sighed for Jessie and her sisterly love and counsel. Even if she did not follow her advice, still she desired it *viva voce*, and wished to be able to give vent to her suppressed feelings. We have long known that she had no self-restraint except that engendered by pride, and knew nothing of self-discipline. She thought she would broach the subject to the Lady Georgiana, but then she remembered having refused Christmas holidays, upon the plea of preferring them in the summer; she remembered also that she had no money. How the forty pounds she had received for her first half-year's salary had gone she did not know. She had sent innumerable presents home, and had paid wonderful sums for carriage, in spite of Jessie's remonstrances. She had given untold shillings and half-crowns to troops of Irish beggars, who regularly beset her in her walks; she had feed every servant in the house at various times, and in return for various kindnesses; she had lavished silver on every pretty peasant-girl or curly-headed child that pleased her fancy; in short, she had spent or given away her money, without, as the saying is, 'having anything to show for it.' True, she possessed a few more dresses, some of which the Countess had given her; had added to her store of amusing books; and finally, had bought of an Italian organ-boy two guinea-pigs. These, her only stock-in-trade, had multiplied so alarmingly that the gardener foretold a famine in carrots, the cook in bread, and the coachman in oats, to each of which worthies Anna and the children had recourse for food, as opportunity offered.

One day the Lady Georgiana had taken the children for a drive; Anna, pleading headache, did not accompany them. The Countess sent for her, and they had, what she liked now better than anything else at Plas Ayron, a *tête-à-tête*. The Countess was genuinely fond of her, and with true Irish warmth of heart always tried to make her happy. She won her to talk unreservedly to her of all but of Chatham. They were not often alone together, and now Anna felt as if she had a great deal to say, if she could only summon courage to say it.

It was rather a cold autumn day, and the Countess was seated by a fire. One of the children's low stools was near her, and Anna had placed herself upon it, so that she was occasionally obliged to raise her face to her companion; and sometimes, when confused, she bent it over her lap. The picture was a pretty one,—dignified age, and graceful, grateful youth.

'I am quite sure you are not well,' said the Countess, 'and I wish you would tell me what is the matter with you.'

Anna could have answered, 'Who can minister to a mind diseased?' but she simply replied 'that she really did not know

what was the matter with her, but she sometimes felt tired and languid and unfit for her duties.'

'I think a little port wine and bark might set you up.'

'Medicine never does me any good; and I am worse than a baby in taking it. I should, perhaps, force myself to swallow it twice, and then throw it away.'

'That would be a bad example for your pupils; they are not too strong-minded in that matter.'

'Oh, I fear, my dear madam, that I am not a fitting example for them, just now, in many ways! I do not struggle against my weakness; I cannot, as some can, teach when I have a violent headache. I feel my patience vanish when my spirits are not good. I am not fit to be a governess.'

Anna was very despondent. Everything connected with her had suddenly put on a mourning robe; the very sun wore black in her sight.

'You are nervous, I think, and teaching is irksome to every one under those circumstances. Perhaps change of air would do you good.'

'Yes, yes, if I could go home! My sister would cure me,—she always does; I am sure I should be well at Fairfield.'

'I daresay it would not be difficult for you to go home for a time: my daughter would have no objection, and the children would not be the worse for a holiday.'

'Oh, thank you! thank you!' exclaimed Anna, clasping the Countess's hand and looking up at her brightly. But her countenance suddenly fell; she remembered her money difficulties.

'Some obstacle?' inquired the Countess. 'Will you not confide in me? I am sincerely your friend, and might assist you with advice.'

'I could not afford the journey,—I have no money.'

'What! you surely'— The Countess paused, not liking to intrude further into the secrets of Anna's account-book.

'I am so foolish—so extravagant—so careless! I know it; and I deserve to suffer. Whilst Jessie is studying to save for every one, I save for no one, and do no good.'

Anna hid her face on her lap, and her long curls fell over it. She was not in the habit of making confessions to any one but her sister, and the words she had uttered slipped from her unawares. Neither was the Countess a demonstrative person usually, but Anna's emotion caused her, for the first time, to lay her hand on her head, half caressingly, half soothingly. The unexpected kindness caused Anna to look up into the Countess's face, and then to seize the gentle hand and imprint a very

affectionate kiss upon it. Trifling as the action of each to the other seems, it had a strange effect. The slight, familiar touch of the Countess, who was generally dignified in her courtesy, opened the springs of Anna's loving heart, melted its pride, and made it ready to confess faults and failings, nay, even little weaknesses, more difficult to acknowledge than glaring defects; whilst the warm kiss of gratitude, and the bright, affectionate glance of the young girl aroused almost maternal feelings in the breast of the Countess. A sudden recollection of her own beautiful daughter, who had, years ago, once sat at her feet, half broken-hearted, after having given up an engagement at her request, flashed upon her, and brought the tears to her eyes. Hers had been a look of anguish, not of gratitude; how much dearer the eyes that now met hers! She thought of that daughter's son, and of his yielding, loving nature, so like his mother's. She longed to make him happy, and to atone to him for the wrong she had done his mother. Thoughts of the 'how and when' came into her mind; and as they came, again the kindly hand stroked the black locks of the wondering Annabella.

'If you go home for a holiday and a change of air,' said the Countess, 'you will promise to return to us? We cannot afford to lose you.'

'O yes, yes!' exclaimed Anna; 'I would not leave you for the world.'

'You must remember this promise, or my daughter will not readily forgive my helping to send you away from us. And as to the dear children, they would be miserable without you.'

Anna thought, for the moment, that she should be equally miserable without them, and she said so.

Just at this part of the conversation the carriage wheels were heard at a distance. The Countess rose from her seat, and went to an escritoire, from which she took a well-filled purse.

'You have done your best to amuse and please me,' she said, 'and that, I know, disinterestedly, because at first you rather feared and shunned me; I should like to please you. Will you allow me to defray the expenses of your journey to and from this place? You must bring back health and spirits in return.'

She let the purse fall gently into Anna's lap, and, stooping over her, pressed her lips upon her forehead.

'Now go to your room, and I will speak to my daughter about it. When we meet again it will all be settled.'

With a vain effort to utter the words, 'I do not deserve it,' Anna was gently impelled from the room by the Countess, and shortly succeeded therein by the Lady Georgiana.

The Countess soon made known to her daughter Anna's wishes, and her own promise of seconding them.

'I think it the wisest plan possible,' said the Lady Georgiana, 'and she has undoubtedly well earned her holiday. The children have done very well, particularly before Chatham came. I only wish he had never come; nothing has gone smoothly since he left.'

'Do you not think, my love, that your manner has changed towards Miss Burton?'

'Not knowingly. I intend to be the same; but it is impossible to feel open with a person who you know holds a secret which is no secret to you.'

'Would it not be better to come to a clear understanding with her?'

'Oh, not for worlds! I would not have her suppose that I thought it even possible that there could have ever been anything serious between her and Chatham.'

'And why?'

'The disparity of their conditions—our own relative positions—his father's opposition;—how can you ask why, my dear mother? The very notion is too absurd.'

'You do not practise your own precepts, Georgiana. I own that there are insuperable obstacles at present, but not those you name. I have often heard you calmly and trustingly discuss the shortness of life, and the folly of the minute distinctions of rank that run away with so much real happiness. This was all in the abstract then; you have not learned to bring it home. I, who am soon going out of this world, into that where the "poor of spirit" reign, have only just begun to realize the fact; so it is no wonder you have yet to learn it.'

The Lady Georgiana blushed. She was a Christian woman, but, as her mother said, had not yet strength sufficient to put in practice her own theory. She had much of the leaven of this world clinging about her; who has not? She took the Countess's hand tenderly, and said,—

'Dearest mother, I do not think we need dispute this point. You yourself own that there are insuperable obstacles in this very disagreeable affair, and until these are surmounted we must let it rest. When that happens, we can talk it over again. I daresay both Chatham and Miss Burton will console themselves; they are not constant enough to die of broken hearts.'

'Constancy is too beautiful a thing to jest upon, my love. Wherever I have seen it I have observed great strength of character and depth of feeling; and even in the bad it elevates

and refines. I hope, for his own sake, Chatham may possess it. Sometimes very volatile people *are* constant.'

'Not often, I fear, my dear mother; and in the present instance I must be allowed to separate my hopes from yours.'

The Countess rose, and, pointing solemnly upwards, said, 'Oh, let not pride divide our hopes! but let them soar together, bearing one another up to that heaven which we can only enter through the merits of One whose perfect life taught us the very essence of humility.'

The Lady Georgiana embraced her mother tenderly, and said she would go at once and tell Miss Burton that she could leave whenever she liked. She went accordingly; and her manner was so much more cordial to Anna than it had been for some time past, that she began to think the Fates were weaving some especial web in her favour. She did not venture to put Chatham in as one of the threads, but she hoped that some favourable change connected with him had taken place. By and by, however, she made up her mind that the said change was occasioned by a knowledge obtained, she did not pretend to understand how, that Chatham had quite given her up. This suggestion of some evil fairy took such strong possession of her mind, that it rooted up much of the pleasure implanted by the Countess, and cast her again on her reserve and dignity.

She resolved to set off in a day or two for home. Once having obtained permission to depart, she could not rest until she was fairly off. Never before had she anticipated holidays with such nervous excitement. Always a spoiled child, always fretting under restraint, it seemed to her as if the last nine months of teaching had been insupportable, and she longed for perfect liberty as if she had been an imprisoned bird, instead of one allowed to fly at ease through pleasant aviaries, subject only to a slight guardianship.

CHAPTER XXII.

'Had he seen *thee*, when he swore
He would love but *me* alone?
Thou wert absent,—sent before
To our kin in Sidmouth town.
When he saw thee, who art best,
Past compare and loveliest,
He but judged thee as the rest.'

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

AGAIN we return to Fairfield, and meet with a cheerful group of old friends. It is the afternoon of a bright autumn day, and the sun is looking good-humouredly down upon the big pigeon-house and surrounding apple trees. Around the said pigeon-house innumerable pigeons are flying, and making wonderful gyrations, as they pop in and out of the little square doors belonging to their private apartments. Beneath the said apple trees, great heaps of apples of every variety of size and colour are lying,—good Somersetshire apples, making a virtue of necessity, and patiently awaiting the hour when they shall be ground and squeezed into must, and yield up their very heart's blood for vicious people to drink at some future day. There are small, sour-looking jaseys, dressed in the very green and yellow of jealousy, reposing face to face with the little red-streaked bitter-sweet,—that compound of the prime elements of life and human nature. Overpowering the rest, both in size and hue, are all the red-faced, bloated Tom Puts that have been rescued from the innumerable puddings and dumplings already consumed by gormandizing human appetite; and, disputing precedence with these fat, florid country gentlemen, are the sleeker and genteeler John Days, of smoother and somewhat paler cheek. Peeping out at every niche are the cheerful-looking red-streaks, bearing resemblance to the autumnal sky now overshadowing them; and daintily resting here and there, as if heartily ashamed of their company, are a few stray pippins, golden as the dawn, or ruddy as the sunset, heedlessly swept away with the ruder crew. Despising equally the society into which a hapless fate has cast them, and wondering, as men and women often wonder under similar circumstances, how they got there, are a few choice nonpareils, whose very name seems an antidote to vulgarity; and not far from these delicate and aristocratic dames are the scarcely less choice but more hardy-looking russets,—gentlemen of birth and some education, strong health and long life, but cast, like the nonpareils, by adverse

fate, into company of an inferior grade to their own, and about shortly to be thrown into the jaws of that devouring monster within the pigeon-house, now sacrificing thousands of their race to his greed.

And, glancing occasionally with pitiless eye upon them, nay, actually looking on whilst the process of destruction is proceeding, is the usually merciful Jessie Burton. She even remarks upon their condition, and takes no measures to alleviate it.

'Uncle James, look here,' she says, picking up a reluctant nonpareil, 'what will you say to this?'

'Shame! shame!' exclaims Uncle James, seizing the unfortunate apple, and inflicting a wound upon it with grinders even more cruel, because slower in their work, than those of the apple-mill. 'You ought to see that not one good keeping apple or famous eating apple is swept up with the rest.'

'But we have such a plentiful crop this year, uncle, that we have all become careless.'

'You will make a fortune by cider alone, girl. What do you think, Joe?'

'Vamous, master, vamous,' said the old farm-servant who stood by; 'just step here and zee the zider.'

'Here come the Captain, Nelson, and Pynsent,' said Aunt Betsey, moving up the orchard towards the gentlemen she announced, whilst Uncle James and Jessie, with a blush on her face, entered the pigeon-house.

The ground floor of this building contained the large cider-mill, now worked by some four lusty men,—in those days machinery and horses had not begun to take the bread out of the labourers' mouths,—and round about the troughs into which the cider was dropping from the reed above them several children were kneeling, doubtfully occupied.

'You young thieves and vagabonds!' cried Uncle James in a thundering voice, 'I'll have you all put into the stocks this very minute. This is the way our cider disappears, and we poor farmers are out of pocket at the end of the year. It was only ten minutes ago I routed you away from the apples, and here you are, tippling in the cider-house.' And here commenced a game that it was good to see.

The children, who were engaged in drawing the sweet cider into their mouths through the tubes of reeds, and who knew Uncle James very well, suddenly threw down their singular drinking-cups, and ran to the other side of the mill. Uncle James, in violent assumed wrath, pursued them; and the urchins, who enjoyed the fun, dodged him round the mill, shrieking with laughter. Jessie could not be an unconcerned spectator of the

play, but joined in it. The men and their windlasses were at a stand-still, for it was impossible to help looking on; whilst Uncle James puffed round the mill, now butting forward, and then suddenly turning short round upon some child, who, bolder than the rest, had ventured close behind him.

At last Uncle James fairly caught one of them. 'Now, you young vagabond,' he said, stopping at intervals to recover his breath, 'I've caught you. I'm going to put you in prison and make an example of you. You'll get no more apples and cider; they'll work you to death; you shall go to the tread-mill, not the cider-mill, you little villain. Here's Miss Burton coming to hold you fast whilst I bind you with my handkerchief. There she is, do you see?'

The child looked through the large doors into the orchard, and saw that Aunt Betsey was approaching, followed by some gentlemen. He began to struggle for freedom in good earnest, for he held Aunt Betsey in extreme awe. As he could not, however, hold her in greater awe than did Uncle James, he had only to struggle until she suddenly walked into the mill, a step that Uncle James little expected, and an honour rarely conferred.

'There, I'll catch you again by and by,' said the good farmer, letting the boy go. 'Sad little thieves, ma'am, drinking all the cider,' he continued. Ah, Cap'en, good-day; I wish you'd been here to punish those young topers. And the young Cap'en, too! how d'ye do, Master Nelson? I'm in two minds about shaking hands with you; you've never been to see me since you came back from Scotland, near two months ago. New friends against old ones, eh?'

'Don't say that,' cried the Captain; 'Nelson is a good boy in the main, and he has been waiting for his lazy old father.'

'No need to make excuses, Cap'en. Where there's a will there's a way; and I daresay if I had a pretty niece or two living with me, he'd find out the old barn often enough.'

Here Uncle James winked at the Captain, and then at Jessie, and the Captain nodded approvingly. Fortunately for Jessie, she was at the other side of the mill, whither Nelson walked, who had seen the knowing wink, and seen it with less annoyance than usual.

'I wonder whether you remember when we used to drink cider through reeds, Jessie?' he asked, as he took one up in his hand.

'Very well,' replied Jessie; 'but I daresay you could not do it now.'

'There's a challenge, Nel,' said Pynsent. 'Let us see whether you or I could perform best;' and he knelt down by the trough,

and began to give very hearty pulls at the reed, inhaling thereby the sweet liquid. Nelson evidently thought the operation undignified, and refrained from following his example; whilst Jessie, who had lost much of her old freedom with Nelson, did not repeat the challenge, contented for the moment with the fact that he had again alluded to old times.

'I remember that you were anxious to carry a few hogsheads with you to India,' she said. 'Did you ever wish for them when there?'

'Indeed I did; I should often have been thankful for a can of old "Zummerzet" on many a broiling march. By the by, Jessie, you have never yet had the tiger-skins I brought you; they are waiting your acceptance at home now. I will bring them down.'

'I don't think Mr. Skinner would approve of that,' said Pynsent. 'I know I should not if I were he.'

Jessie laughed, and Nelson asked what Pynsent meant.

'Only that if Jessie is not already engaged to Mr. Skinner,—soon expected to write himself Sir Jedediah Skinner, Bart.,—she soon will be; and a capital match, I can tell you. I expect him to cancel the mortgages, and free Fairfield. What an invaluable brother-in-law! As heir and head of the family, I am decidedly for the match. I shall "throw physic to the dogs," and live on my estate, and on my sister and brother Skinner. I hope, Jessie, you will keep better cheese and fresher biscuits.'

'Ah, what a pattern Jessie is!' broke in the admiring Captain, addressing with his eyes Uncle James, and with his heart his son Nelson, 'to pay off another hundred this year again, and injure nobody!'

'You are unjust, Captain Burford,' said Pynsent; 'you know I helped; you never give me any credit. I put the whole of that blessed ten-pound Bank of England that the strange gentleman at the inn gave me for curing his spasms'—

'*Alias* giving him peppermint water and ammonia for palpitation of the heart, caused by eating too much cheese after dinner,' said Jessie.

'He called me a very clever young practitioner, Miss Impudence, and gave me his card, in case of my ever practising in London.'

'By the way, nevy, how is old Molly?' inquired Uncle James.

'Now, uncle, that reminds me, if you ever send for me on any of those old women's errands again, I won't go. I rode two good miles out of my way, through the wood; I saw Molly; very ill she was, to all appearance. I left her a dose of innocent

medicine, that I took with me, that could do no harm if it did no good. I went again with more medicine. "Dear heart! I'm a sight better," said she. I did not see much change myself. I went a third time, when I thought she must have taken all the medicine, and carried more in my pocket, together with some warm flannel garment or other from Jessie for her rheumatism. She was gone out, so I went into the house, and waited her return. I amused myself by looking at the backs of three old books on the shelf. Took them down, and lo! behind them were my two bottles of medicine, untouched, and the corks undrawn. I sat down in righteous wrath with the bottles before me. Molly soon came hobbling in, with an apronful of something. I was too indignant to speak, but pointed to the bottles. "Lord bless you, Master Pynsent!—I ax your pardon, Dr. Pynsent—but I war told of a zarten cure, and I just tried it vurst." "What was it?" I asked. "Pobble broth, Doctor." "What the deuce is that?" said I; I could have sworn with all my heart. "Pobble broth is pobbles boiled in water; and then you drinks the liquor." I requested further information, as calmly as I could. "There be a vamous zpring down a mile in the wood, as runs over thizen zort o' pobbles; they be good for the rheumatiz, I was told. I had zome fetched, and boiled 'em. I velt better a'most directly. I tried 'em again, and in a day or two was able to go and vetch 'em; and now I be a'most total cured." "I'm glad to hear it," said I; "then you don't want this?" and I drew forth the flannel article. I took up the bottles, and poked them and the flannel into my pocket again, and walked away to where I had tied up my horse. "Lord bless you, Doctor," screamed Molly, "if you knowed how I zuffers in my back and arms." "Take plenty of pobble broth," cried I, and rode away.'

'And the flannel jacket?' said Jessie, laughing heartily.

'I relented when I met her grandson, and sent it back to her, recommending him to tell her to dip it in the broth before she put it on. He grinned, and said, "She's a'most crazed about that broth, zur." And there end my visits to Molly.'

'Haw! haw! haw!' shouted Uncle James, over and above the laughter of the rest.

'You may laugh, Squire, but I will send you a bill for the medicine and attendance,' said Pynsent.

'Why, you had your medicine again, nevy; and the receipt for the rheumatism may be worth thousands to you. Haw! haw! haw! I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I can't help it. Haw! haw! haw!' and the old pigeon-house rang with laughter, which communicated itself to the men, idling over the windlasses.

Aunt Betsey looked complacently majestic, and Uncle James was satisfied. His reverence of, and fear of offending Aunt Betsey, never diminished; whilst her sufferance of him had visibly increased since the Michelson defalcation.

'Here comes a lady-caller, Jessie,' said Pynsent. 'Let me hide behind the door till she passes.'

'Who is it?' said Jessie, looking up the orchard. 'How like the walk is to Anna's! I declare, if I did not know it was impossible, I should think it was Anna.'

'God forbid!' muttered the Captain involuntarily.

Jessie went outside, and in a few moments was flying rather than running up the orchard; whilst the lady took an equally sudden flight towards Jessie, and they were immediately in each other's arms.

It was, as we all know, Anna, who had purposely avoided announcing her arrival; and the confusion and various sensations she occasioned were indescribable. Perhaps the only members of the party who experienced unmixed pleasure at seeing her were Jessie and her uncle and aunt. Captain Burford saw his new hopes blown away like soap-bubbles; and Nelson, at a touch, felt his new strength, that had taken him months to build up, pulled down. All personal feeling was, however, soon forgotten, in lamentations over Anna's sickly appearance. Everybody perceived that there was something wrong somewhere, although Jessie alone knew where the blister drew.

That night the sisters sat up late. Captain Michelson was the subject of their conversation. Anna assured Jessie that they had given each other up, and that she had come home to brush off all old recollections. Even to her sister, Anna found it impossible to reveal the depths of her heart; but she knew that far down in its recesses lay the image of Chatham Michelson, covered and choked up by many unkind, bad feelings,—that ill weed, pride, superabounding,—yet never, she believed, to be quite rooted out. Still, what she most longed for was an opportunity of showing Chatham that she did not care for him. Had his father now been at her feet, she might have married him,—even him,—to prove to the son that others would be proud to wear the jewel he had cast off. She did not tell Jessie this; she did not at once quite feel it herself; but a circumstance that occurred during her holidays revealed the power of the tempter.

When she had been a few days at home, she chanced to meet Lady Mansford, who at once invited her to the Park. She did not wish to go, and pleaded illness. Her ladyship would nurse

her. After frequent refusals, she consented to spend a long day with her, and went accordingly the following week. As if by some preconcerted plan, Lady Mansford talked of nothing but the Michelsons and their mutual friends in Wales. It was a natural subject of conversation between them, still Anna fancied there was intention in what appeared to be merely the heedless gossip of a woman of the world. Underneath the gossip there was certainly a desire to discover whether Anna was at all interested in the Michelsons, which Anna's careless manner entirely baffled.

'You know,' said Lady Mansford, 'that Mr. Michelson and his son were said to have had a quarrel,—some say about the election, others say about Miss Erskine.'

'I was not aware of it,' replied Anna, scarcely conscious that she was telling a falsehood.

'After the election—which, by the by, was a shameful affair, and won by bribery—Mr. Michelson went abroad, his usual place of refuge under annoyances. This last season he returned to London; I saw him frequently. He was looking remarkably well, and younger than ever. It was about the time of Captain Michelson's return from his Welsh trip. Miss Erskine was in town,—you remember her? I think Captain Michelson always admired her, but did not choose to let it be seen, lest he should be supposed to be a money-hunter; but his father always wished him to propose for her.'

'I thought,' said Anna, 'that when Captain Michelson left Wales, he intended rejoining his regiment, quartered in the north of England.'

'I believe he did so; but, hearing his father was in England, he got extended leave, and came to town. He was again thrown into Miss Erskine's society, and I thought matters were progressing fairly when I was obliged to leave London.'

'Ah, indeed!' said Anna, by way of saying something, whilst a pang shot through her heart.

'You know Captain Michelson must have money, in spite of his delicacy about it.'

'I suppose so; his father is so poor!' said Anna satirically.

'His father, my dear! he will probably marry again, and certainly, during his life, will not do much for his son.'

'Is Miss Erskine much admired?' asked Anna carelessly. 'She seemed good-natured, but I never thought her pretty; and the gentlemen used rather to laugh at her.'

'Oh, she is much thinner, and therefore better looking. She is reckoned very handsome in town.'

'London society must have peculiar notions of beauty,' said

Anna, who was beginning to feel her courage and therewith a portion of her pride and satire rise; 'she would never have struck me as even good-looking.'

'Gentlemen's and ladies' beauties are always of different kinds. I think men generally like rather plump women. You know George the Fourth's "fat, fair, and forty."'

Lady Mansford came precisely under this class, and Miss Erskine under the two first divisions of it; whereas Anna was dark and slight.

'Certainly there is no accounting for taste,' said Anna. 'Are you an admirer of Miss Erskine's personal appearance, Sir Thomas?' she added, as that gentleman entered the room.

'I? no!' replied he, laughing; 'who is? She cannot help being like a very large wax doll, because she was not the founder of her own good looks. In your presence we have no room for the admiration we sometimes bestow on dolls.' Anna blushed and felt pleased, whilst Lady Mansford bit her lips.

The arrow had struck home, nevertheless, whether intentionally aimed or not. Anna left Mansford Park that night, more than ever resolved to forget Chatham Michelson, and buckled up in an armour of pride and resentment, proof against the incursions of all gentler feelings.

From that day she forced her spirits into their old channel; walked, drove, and amused herself. Every one but Jessie thought her gay as of old, but she saw the occasional depression, and guessed the cause. She, poor girl, saw also much more that it was pain and grief for her to see,—Anna encouraged rather than repulsed the quiet, but too evident attentions of Nelson.

As Pynsent was much occupied, Nelson frequently took Anna long drives for health's sake, accompanied, it is true, by Aunt Betsey, and sometimes by Jessie, but as dangerous for him as if he had been alone with her. He was now constantly at Fairfield, attracted by that irresistible charm that Anna possessed, and that nobody could describe. He walked with her, listened to her, gazed on her, and finally gave himself up to his love for her,—or, more properly, his passion; for the pure, true love, that is the birth of friendship and esteem and mutual confidence, he had given in his boyhood and youth. With Anna he had little in common, yet he adored her. He was reserved, deep-thinking, and far-seeing; naturally an admirer of simplicity and goodness in all things; himself possessing somewhat of his father's straightforwardness of character, and hating duplicity; with strong affections for the few he could esteem, and who knew and loved him; but with no art of acquiring general

admiration or spontaneous tenderness either from woman or man. Those few who did know him intimately, especially those who had been with him in his boyhood, and witnessed the many generous actions and fine minute traits of character that he always tried to conceal, conceived and preserved a strong attachment for him; others considered him cold and stern; some thought him even hard of heart, because his strong sense of justice frequently overcame his kinder feelings; few, if any, thought him capable of the passion of love. But there it was in his breast, burning, consuming him,—as those alone are, perhaps, consumed, who are outwardly cold and reserved to the world at large. Hidden fires that find no vent are the most dangerous. Long the master of himself and of those who knew him well, he was now entirely overcome. Beauty—the subtle poison, the tempting serpent—had done the work; and yet he fully understood Anna's true character. But her very faults became beauties,—there was in each something so captivating. If she said a perverse thing, it was said with a grace so peculiar that it instantly became a talisman wherewith to drag the resisting will of others towards her; and if she said a pleasant thing, that will, then unresisting, leaped forward to meet her, as it were, before she could finish uttering the words that were on her lips.

And so with this attractive creature Nelson was in love. Willingly or unwillingly, all about them gradually perceived it. Even Dinah, in a half-condoling, half-mirthful strain, began to talk to Jessie about Mr. Nelson and Miss Anna. But Jessie soon caused her to cease by a very decided disapprobation both in face and manner, and by sending her at once away on some errand that she improvised for the occasion. Then Jessie went to her chamber and bolted the door. Shall we intrude upon her privacy? Yes, because such feelings are an honour to her, and an example to others.

On her knees, by her bedside—lowly—lowly! Not leaning against the bed, but with her head almost touching the ground, she pours out her grief to One who has listened to her unselfish prayers for others for years and years. She sobs—low, smothered sobs. She cannot weep. 'It is so hard! so hard! Her sister—the child of her love!—she whom she has nursed, and fondled, and watched, and taught, ever since their dear mother gave her to her charge on her deathbed!—to come between her and her love—the one pure, hallowed love of her whole life! O God, this is too bitter a draught for poor human nature! Any one else! oh, any one else! If she could only have been so tried by another! She deserved chastisement! but oh, not through her! And that sister did not love him; she did not care for him; she

could not understand him, and never, never make him happy, or he her. Oh, pain! oh, agony!' Still the low sob, as if her heart would break. Arouse thyself, poor Jessie! These pains must be borne and overcome. She does arouse herself. She does summon to her aid the one true safeguard,—she prays. She prays to be supported and taught to act aright through this great anguish, whatever may be its end; she prays to be preserved from jealousy and evil thoughts of her sister; she prays to be enabled to overcome an affection that has grown with her growth, and strengthened with her strength. Long and earnestly she prays, and the sobs soften into tears, like clouds into dew. She arises, strengthened and refreshed, as all those arise who ask aright. She goes towards the open window, and lets the fresh autumn breeze play upon her falling tears, and silently, gradually, dry them up. A pair of white pigeons fly upon the window-sill; unconsciously she strokes them, and gathers a rosebud that is thrusting its pretty lips towards her, as if to offer kisses and consolation. She looks across into her garden, and the perfumes of the flowers, the humming of the bees around their hives, the soft cooing of the pigeons, seem to steal through the vacant senses into the pre-occupied soul, and insensibly soothe and calm. 'So many blessings,' she murmurs, 'and yet ungrateful and discontented!' A little scratching and whining at the door,—she pays no attention; louder and more imperative it grows. She opens the door. In bursts a beautiful Scotch terrier, that Nelson brought from Scotland and had given to her: it is of the real long-haired, bright, intelligent, faithful Ayrshire breed, and has the winning, attractive ways of its race, jumping, biting, gambolling, pulling at her gown. It will be, and at last is, attended to.

'Poor Sandy!' ejaculates Jessie, taking him up in her arms, and again letting a tear roll down her cheek. With quick perception, and a feeling beyond instinct, Sandy licks off the tear, and rubs his long, soft hair against her face, and fixes his bright black eyes upon her, and asks, as plainly as dog can ask, what is the matter. She strokes his pretty head and smiles. He is more satisfied. She puts him down on the high window-seat upon which she has been leaning, and, with one hand on his back, again looks across into her garden. 'Tap, tap,' at the door. 'Wanted, miss, please,' says Dinah without; 'directly, please, miss.' 'I will come,' says Jessie, and goes to her ewer, pours out water, and washes her face. It is no good for her to attempt to efface the traces of tears, for there they are. With one more silent prayer for help, she leaves her room, and walks slowly down the passage, little Sandy pulling at her gown. Just entering the front door are Nelson and Anna, who have been

walking through the corn-fields. She hurries past them, hiding her face, but saying, as cheerily as she can,—

'You must have your jelly now, Anna;' and, hastening into her pantry, she prepares a glass of clear bright jelly for that rival sister, who little thinks what sad tears dim her eyes as she does so.

CHAPTER XXIII.

'But if that virtue be of so great might
Which from just verdict will for nothing start,
But, to preserve inviolated right,
Oft spills the principal to save the part;
So much more, then, is that of power and art
That seeks to save the subject of her skill,
Yet never doth from doom of right depart;
As it is greater praise to save than spill,
And better to reform than to cut off the ill.'—SPENSER.

JUST at the close of Anna's holidays, when she was thinking of returning into Wales, and dreading the prospect of beginning to teach again, Nelson proposed for her, and was accepted,—yes, accepted! We will take a slight glance into their hearts. Nelson was madly in love, and he did what almost every one so desperately smitten would have done,—made an effort to win the girl who had taken hold of his affections. He looked upon his early attachment to Jessie as a brother's love for his sister, so different was it from his present frame of mind. He took it for granted that she entertained similar feelings for him, or else he took nothing for granted, and did not care to think about it. He knew that no shadow of an engagement had ever existed between them save in his father's will and imagination; and that, since his return from India, nothing but the mere commonplaces of friendship had passed between them. In his mind, therefore, the only drawback was his father. He resolved to try his fate with Anna first, and to tell him only if he succeeded. Having succeeded, nothing—not even his father's anger—seemed of moment to him. The only thing he tried to feel careless about was meeting Jessie. He did not know why it was, but he wished her away. Alas, poor Jessie!

And Anna? Hers was a troubled heart. She had resolved to accept Nelson, if he proposed for her, even before he did so. She consulted no one,—trusted no one. She wished to prove to Chatham that she could marry well; moreover, she was

anxious to marry. Now Chatham had given her up, she had no wish to remain at Plas Ayron ; she began to grow tired of her position of governess ; she liked the prospect of going to India, —gorgeous, warm India, where she should be as a queen, instead of in the doubtful position she now held. She would forget Chatham,—was forgetting, despising, hating him almost. She esteemed and admired Nelson, and knew, despite his reserve even with her, that he worshipped her very shadow. She liked such worship from such a proud, shy man, almost as much as the open admiration of the gay, light Chatham ; she tried to think she liked it better. She thought only of herself. She forgot whether she was acting rightly by Nelson, or others who belonged to her. To do her justice, she did not know that Jessie loved Nelson. She was a child when he went away, and thought of the old story of the intended marriage as a mere jest. Since his return, whenever he had been in her society, it was evident that he had always been devoted to her ; had spoken little to Jessie, and had left home when she went into Wales. She knew that his father liked Jessie best, and wished Nelson to marry her ; but as that was impossible, and as there was no apparent love on Jessie's side, she saw no reason why she should not accept him. She would, in short, have done anything to feed her pride, and to annoy Chatham Michelson. She was quite resolved to keep her promise of returning into Wales, and although she dreaded the disclosure of her engagement, had a certain undefined wish to know what the Countess would think of it, and to strive to discover whether Chatham were apprised of it. She also anxiously desired to prove to the Lady Georgiana that she could marry well, although her nephew and herself might think her beneath them. With all these improper and conflicting feelings in her mind, Anna accepted Nelson, and tried to make him believe, without directly telling him so, that she did so from affection.

The intelligence was variously received by the friends of the parties. Captain Burford was so much enraged, that he declared he would never speak to his son again, never enter Fairfield whilst Anna was there, never countenance such a marriage ; leave all his fortune to Jessie, who was the rightful wife for his son ; and, finally, go away from home until it was all over. Although his wrath did not lead him to these extremes, it cooled into a settled displeasure. He avoided Nelson, scarcely spoke to him when they met, and when he did speak, it was with an effort to suppress a burst of passion ; did not enter Fairfield, but wrote a long letter of complaints and condolence to Jessie ; and set his face against the match. Pynsent was almost as much annoyed

as the Captain, and spoke so severely to Anna about her vanity in marrying for the mere sake of marrying, her heartlessness in accepting a man she did not care for, and her thoughtlessness of others who might care for him, that he roused every bad passion of her breast, and made her resolve to go through with the affair, if only to prove to Pynsent that he should not domineer over her.

Aunt Betsey and Uncle James looked rather favourably upon the match, and did not enter minutely into all its ins and outs. A wedding to them was a wedding, and they were, bachelor and old maid like, very glad to canvass all its details. The only one of the party who did not know what course to pursue was Jessie. Her heart was sore, but she struggled hard to prevent the wound from being known. As the roots of her affection had been planted years and years before, so they had penetrated deeply and intricately into every crevice of her nature, and it would have been impossible for her to tear them out, without throwing down the structure into which they had so curiously entwined themselves. All she could do was to hide them; to heap up earth upon them, and keep them underground; cut off all the fresh shoots, and let them creep on unknown to any one but herself. There they were, and there they must remain until she died, and they died with her. Outwardly she was calm and composed; less cheerful, perhaps, to a loving, anxious eye, like Pynsent's, but unchanged towards Nelson and Anna. The one was too engrossed with his own selfish happiness to think much of anything else; the other was too much taken up with her own various plans, hopes, fears, and tumults, to cast a look upon Jessie.

Often did Jessie endeavour to speak to Anna upon this subject, so near her heart, and to court her to pour out her real feelings to her, but she could not do it,—the words faded on her lips. She knew that Anna did not love Nelson, and she longed to entreat her to pause before she committed the crime of marrying him, and dragged both herself and him into misery, but the fear of being selfish, and of seeming to advise for her own ends, kept her silent; so she had to suffer alone, and to wear a cheerful face whilst she had a hidden grief that might be softened, but never quite washed away, even by her tears.

Anna refused to come to any decision respecting the period of her marriage, until she had completed her three months in Wales. Nelson wished her not to return, but on this point she was decided. Wilful in thought, word, and deed, no one but such a blind lover as he was could have failed to perceive that a secret, scarcely acknowledged to herself, lay beneath her

wilfulness. She had still a forlorn hope of meeting or hearing of Chatham once more before she became another's; and therefore, after two months of home, and after sowing, partly advisedly and partly unadvisedly, the seeds of much mischief, she again left Fairfield, with renewed health, and vastly improved though still fluctuating spirits.

Soon after she was gone Nelson went to London, and Captain Burford once more made his appearance in his own old haunts. He found Jessie alone, and soon began the subject of their mutual grievances.

'I tell you what it is, my dear girl, I never will countenance that match,' he began, as he seated himself by her side. 'As guardian, I can prevent her marrying until she is one-and-twenty, and by Jove I will.'

'My dear sir,' said Jessie, 'you surely would not use forcible measures. Nelson is quite old enough to know his own mind, and Anna'—

'Doesn't know her mind at all. I am not quite a fool, Jessie. She don't care a fraction for Nelson. I hope she'll make him wretched, I do, and that they may lead a cat-and-dog life. But they shall not marry. I can prevent it for some time yet, until Nelson is obliged to sail for India, and Miss Anna will never bear a ten years' engagement. If I can only get my co-guardians to agree to my plans, and make them see things in their right light, the dickens a bit shall they ever be made one! Fore and aft not more inseparably divided.'

'You do not mean what you say,' said Jessie, forcing down a strange hope that she knew ought not to arise. 'It must all take its course.'

'I told Nelson that, as guardian, Anna was not entitled to her thousand pounds fortune till she was of age, and should not have it then if I could help it; and the impertinent scoundrel got into a passion, and said if it were twenty thousand he would not take a penny of it from her brothers and— He had the grace to stop before he said "sister," but I told him, pretty sharply, that you wanted to be under no obligations to him.'

The colour came into Jessie's cheeks as she said, 'I wish, for my sake, you would not allude to me; it can do no good, and is so very, very painful to me.'

'My darling!' cried the good Captain, putting his arm round her waist, and laying her head on his shoulder, and patting her cheek; 'my pet! I would not pain you for all the gold of Ophir; I will try to hold my tongue. But you know I had set my heart upon you for my daughter-in-law, you are so well suited to

Nelson; and I promised your father—ass! fool! blind, senseless oaf! I vow he is no son of mine.'

Jessie put her hand upon the Captain's mouth, and threw her arms round his neck. 'You must not,' she said, 'you must not. We cannot command our affections. It is better as it is. Look at me: I am not beautiful, or clever, or in any way accomplished. I am not intended by nature to win love, only friendship, and that Nelson has given me. He could not—who could?—resist the fascinations of Anna. Besides, I must remain at Fairfield. The old place must not go to ruin. Pynsent has his profession; Peter is away on the seas; Charles is in London, and will soon be in Italy: what would become of Fairfield without me? and Aunt Betsey, and Uncle James, and you yourself, Captain Burford? You could not have a rubber, or anything, if I were gone. I am very vain, but you know it is all quite true.'

'True! ay, I know that. Blind fool! You are everything to everybody but to him, and he will know it when it is too late.'

'But promise me, Captain Burford, that you will put none of your threats into execution. It makes me unhappy to hear you speak so. I shall not sleep to-night if you do not revoke your words, and I must be up early to-morrow.'

'I'll be— I beg your pardon, my darling, I was on the verge of a deuced bad oath; but what I've said I'll stand to. If Nelson marries Anna they may go to—India, or the world's end, if they will, I never want to see either of them again.'

Here Jessie's tears, long on the verge of being shed, fell in good earnest, and at the sight of them the Captain got up and fussed about the room, pished and pshawed, stamped his foot, but finally returned to put his arms round Jessie.

'I'll marry you myself, and come and live here, I'll be flogged if I don't,' said he.

'That is a capital plan,' said Jessie, smiling through her tears: 'and then you will forgive Nelson?'

'Yes, then, and not till then; so the sooner you fix the day the better.'

'I am ready now, directly; we will get aunty to be bridesmaid, and Uncle James to give me away.'

'You are a dear, good angel of a girl, but I am not an angel of a man. I was never made to break my word by mortal yet. Old Cap'en Stedfast, the men used to call me; and now, by my own son! Job himself would never have put up with it.'

'My dear Captain Burford, we were babies!'

'But I was not a baby! the deuce is in it if I was; and your father wasn't a baby; and you didn't grow up babies; and Nel was no baby when he went to India first, and told me that he

knew he should never see anybody he liked as well as you—There, I will hold my tongue. Now, don't cry,—I cannot bear that. A woman's tears always floored me. 'Twill be all the same a hundred years hence, since there are no married people in heaven.'

'Then it is better to die single,' said Jessie archly.

'I believe it; for then, at least, you have no children to bother you. You and Pynsent are the only children I ever saw who never gave anybody any trouble,—except, indeed, that wonderful Tiny, who was staying here last year; but she was an old woman in disguise,—a youthful figurehead upon an old craft.'

'She is quite well,' said Jessie, glad to turn the conversation, 'and is already wondering what she can do to make herself useful, and earn her livelihood.'

'Save us! she scarcely ten year old!'

'And I heard from Charles to-day, who has good hopes of getting to Italy. I will read you what he says about it. "Uncle Timothy is for my at once setting off on my travels, and of course offers to pay my expenses; but this I could never allow. Perhaps in the course of another year we may be able to raise the money amongst us, as Uncle James kindly offered to assist. I am working hard,—as hard, at least, as my uncle will let me, who fears for my health. I am, however, very strong, and I think less lame than I was, though I fear I shall never quite get rid of the slight limp I still have. Ladies have 'Grecian bends;' why not a Grecian limp? Tiny is very well. Her drawing is wonderful, and she is wonderful. Her mother's health is bad, and she waits upon her, teaches their few scholars, works, and fags like a woman. Her countenance grows more spiritual every day. She seldom comes here, but I go to see her as often as I can. I love the child, and get more and more interested in her every day. She seems to have an innate perception of the beautiful in art that is quite incomprehensible. One of my greatest anxieties, if I leave London, will be this child. Uncle Timothy is as good to her as he can be; but he sees her seldom, and I think his housekeeper dislikes her and her mother. She often throws out strange hints to me about them, but I do not choose to take them, for I do not much like the woman. She is a fawning, cringing thing, without, I fear, any one's interest but her own at heart, though she professes to be devoted to my uncle. He is quite well, and overwhelmed with engagements, professional and philanthropic. I will write more about Italy soon. Meanwhile, will you try to find out what can be done in the money way? Very little would suffice me; for truly painting is meat, drink, and sleep to me."'

'Doesn't he say anything about Nelson and Anna?' asked the Captain, as Jessie ceased reading.

'Not much; at the beginning of the letter,—a few words,' replied Jessie, with hesitation.

'I should like to see them. There can be no secrets about them.'

The Captain twisted the letter out of Jessie's hands.

'May I read it? Yes? I like to know Charles's opinions, because he is sensible, and speaks without reserve. I wish all young men would get rid of that cursed reserve,—it is the bane of all social intercourse. Let me see; here it is:—"I do not like the marriage; they are not suited in habits or disposition."—Right, my boy, right!—"And they will both repent it before they have been married a year."—I hope with all my soul they will, Charley.—"No two should marry who have not some impulses in common."—Ho! ho! you get beyond me now. What does he mean, Jessie? I believe they will be impelled to pull one another's eyes out before long. Fancy that babe Charles knowing anything about impulses!—"Love is too holy and heavenly a plant to be forced into all soils, and trained into all forms."—That will do, thank you, Jessie. I am afraid I must give up Charles's sense; I believe the boy must be smitten himself. Tiny is too young, or I should be expecting "love in a garret" soon; and oh! the impulses!'

The arrival of Uncle James, and Jessie's glad proposal of a rubber, put an end to the conversation; and the Captain was soon heard scolding Jessie in right good earnest.

'What! three honours in your own hand, and not play them; and I the fourth, and we actually lose the trick! Four by honours, and lose the odd trick! 'Pon my word, Jessie, if you do not play better, I'll teach Dinah. It is more than enough to provoke a saint. We'll change partners. I can't stand this;' and down went the pack of cards in a fury on the table, and up rose the Captain in wrath.

'Haw! haw! haw!' roared Uncle James. 'Do you think I am going to take Jessie and hold four by honours, and lose the trick? Not as long as I am sure of one honour,—the honour of playing with you, ma'am;' and he made a bow to Aunt Betsey, which she returned with dignity.

'Captain Burford, do sit down and try me once more, only this once. I assure you I will do better.'

'So you have said every other evening for these twelve years. You will never play whist; nobody can who husbands the trumps.'

'Here is a letter for you, Jessie,' said Pynsent, who has just

returned from the town. 'It is an Indian post-mark, and there is ever so much money to pay.'

'It is from Louisa Colville; oh! I am so glad. Stay and hear, Pynsent; pray do not run away.'

'There is a messenger waiting for me, who says some poor woman is dying about six miles off, and I must order my horse at once.'

'Oh! she'll wait a few minutes, I daresay, Pyn,' said Uncle James; 'and you know she don't pay.'

'I wish anybody paid,' said Pynsent; 'it is all work and no pay in the country; I am sick of it.'

'Louisa Colville desires her kind regards to you, Pynsent, and hopes your chessmen are still unbroken; and her love to you, Uncle James. Does not your heart beat?'

'I hope so, my dear. There! I vow Pynsent is off. I never saw any one like that boy; morning, noon, and night he is at it, pay or no pay. And what does pretty Miss Colville say of India?'

'She does not like it much, and wishes herself at Fairfield. She fears there is little chance of her returning to England for some years, and complains of the artificial position of women in India.'

'Pshaw!' said Captain Burford. 'They all like it. That is the first bit of affectation I ever remember Miss Colville guilty of. There is not a woman in the world who does not glory in having crowds of men at her feet; and in India, where the dear creatures are in the minority, they are happy, if they are happy anywhere.'

'Oh, listen, Captain Burford!' interrupted Jessie. 'Louisa has actually met Peter.'

'Hurrah!' shouted the Captain.

'And she says he is quite well, and so like Anna that she should have known him anywhere. Her papa and mamma liked him so much that they insisted on his staying with them as long as he was ashore, and he has promised to pay them another visit. Poor Peter! Just hear what she says:—"We did nothing but talk of you from morning till night. He was quite as willing a listener as I was a narrator; and we canvassed Fairfield and all belonging to it as industriously as your Uncle James canvassed at the election for Mr. Michelson. We all think Peter so handsome. He is a regular sailor, and very much beloved by his messmates. Of course you know that he is second lieutenant, and showed me a purse full of prize-money that he had gained in taking a pirate ship; but did not tell me of the compliment paid him on the occasion by the commander.

The said prize-money was all spent whilst he was on shore, partly in presents to send home, and partly in presents to those about him. He strikes me as being as much like Anna in his ways as in his person. He talks of writing to you soon, and I had almost prevailed on him to begin a letter, and actually put out writing materials, when he suddenly whirled me round like a teetotum and seated me at the piano, begging my pardon in the oddest way, and assuring me that as I had been so long at Fairfield he looked upon me as belonging to him. Mamma, who is generally very particular, laughed outright, and asked me if his brothers were like him. We both exclaimed at the very idea, assuring her that the son and heir, Dr. Pynsent Burton, was the very pink of propriety, solidity, and crossness, and would much rather twirl a pill than a young lady in a waltz. The latter simile was Peter's, who, however, to mollify it, declared that his brother was the 'best fellow in the world,' when he knew him. Oh, how we talked of you all, and longed to be together at dear, pleasant, cheerful, old-fashioned, hospitable Fairfield! With the exception of the one day on which I met my parents, I still look upon the days I passed at Fairfield as the happiest of my life. I hate India; I hate the heat, the natives, the palanquins, the mosquitoes, the finery, the helplessness, the uselessness, the—shall I say it?—the officers and all. I hope my dear papa will not read this, for I adore him; and I love you, my dear Jessie, as much, or better, than ever; and mamma loves you by report, as everybody"'—

Here Jessie paused.

'Go on, go on! cried the Captain. 'She is right; God bless her!—"as everybody who knows you, fools excepted, must." I know what the end of it is.'

'This is quite a white day,' said Jessie. 'Such comfortable letters from Charles and Louisa, and all of us well, and, I hope, likely to do well. How thankful we ought to be!'

'Ho! ho! Mr. Pynsent,' said Uncle James, 'so you have been listening to the letter after all? Pretty Miss Colville touches you up a little, but I think she has a hankering for you at bottom.'

'I only returned whilst John is saddling my horse,' said Pynsent, slightly embarrassed.

'You shall read all the letter when you come back,' said Jessie, as Pynsent again left the room.

'Pynsent is a rum chap,' said Uncle James. 'Anybody else would have fallen in love with that pretty girl, but he was as cool as a cowcumer.'

'He is a sensible young man,' said Aunt Betsey, with a glance that dumbfounded Uncle James.

Jessie retired to rest that night with a heart so full of thankfulness that she almost forgot her one great sorrow, and very nearly succeeded in getting rid of the wicked demon of jealousy that she had been for some time combating. She wrote a long, affectionate letter to Anna, in which she uttered prayers for her happiness, joined with entreaties to her to look well into her own heart before she took the decisive step. She felt happier after she had said this, because she knew it was a duty, and she had tried to do it without selfishness.

CHAPTER XXIV.

'C'est le premier pas qui coûte.'

ANNA arrived once more safely at Plas Ayron, and was kindly welcomed by all. From the first day of her return she had the disclosure of her intended marriage on her lips, but had not courage to bring it out. She could not even hint at her intending to leave her situation in a few months, but went on teaching as usual, and listening for news of Chatham. Once, and once only, she heard his name mentioned by the Countess, who expressed her astonishment at not hearing from him, and her intention of writing to him.

About two months after Anna's return from her holidays, to the surprise of every one, he made his appearance. Had he dropped from the clouds, instead of walking into the drawing-room, looking frost-bitten, one winter night, they could not have been more astonished. Anna did not faint, but she suppressed a scream, and turned very pale. As at their parting, so at their meeting,—a bow, a slight curtsey, and a chilly touch of the fingers was all the outward display of the inward feelings.

Chatham looked ill. His spirits seemed depressed, and he tried in vain to rally them. He was as much changed as Anna. Towards her he was cold and distant, but her haughtiness and pride turned to timid and sorrowful shyness towards him. She felt tears frequently swelling in her eyes, and if she did meet his glance, hers sank before it, like that of a culprit before a judge. She resolved to avoid him, but her self-restraint and resolution were not sufficient for the task. She found herself in his presence whenever and wherever she could manage it without exciting observation. She never permitted herself to be a

moment alone with him, but in the presence of others she thought herself secure.

He professed to have run down a few days to see his friends and to spend his Christmas with them. One week, or thereabouts, was the extent of his visit; he must return soon after Christmas Day.

On Christmas Eve the children had a little party, and Anna exerted herself to amuse them. Chatham also joined in their sports, and thus he and Anna were thrown rather more together than they had been before. She looked well. She had dressed herself with care, and, forgetful of Nelson, sought only how she could charm Captain Michelson into his old admiration of her beauty. She knew that Chatham was looking at her; she felt that his rigid mouth relaxed into a smile when they were near each other. Their eyes met, and who could withstand the soft yet glowing fire of her bright orbs? Their beams too surely penetrated wheresoever they were directed. Anna knew that they had not been now pointed in vain.

That night the bow was less stiff, the manner less cold. He lighted her candle for her when she went up-stairs, and she inwardly compared it to the rekindling of the flame within. When she was in her bedroom, she sat down—it was twelve o'clock—and wrote two letters,—one to Nelson, the other to Jessie. They were long, eager, hasty letters, written in extreme excitement and turbulence of mind, to judge from the varying expression of her countenance,—the tears in her eyes,—the trembling of her hand,—the frequent erasures, and still more frequent interlineations. She sealed her letters without reading them over, and, as if afraid of an inclination to unsay what she had written, crept down-stairs to put them into the open post-bag, ready for the early morning mail. She felt like a culprit as she silently glided into the library and went to the side-table where the bag had been left, at her request, for the reception of her letters. Her fingers trembled as she locked it, and she sank, for a moment, into the chair by the writing-table, as if unable to move. The letter-bag was on the table; she folded her arms across it, and leaned her head upon them. Tears fell, accompanied by a slight hysterical sob. Her candle burned out. She had written so long that she was unconscious of its having been flickering in the socket when she came down-stairs. There was still the light of the fire in the dim library, that cast a faint red glow upon her white dress, and made her recumbent figure the prominent feature of the room. A marble bust stood on a pedestal close by, and was also made clear by the firelight. The calm, severe head of some old poet or divine seemed to

be looking coldly down upon her, as if reproaching her for her self-abasement.

Hush! there is a sound,—a movement at the other end of the room. Anna does not hear it, but continues to sob faintly over the closed letters. In the shadow, behind the large fire-screen, out of the easy-chair, a figure rises softly. It may be a dark ghost, it moves so breathlessly across the room. It draws near—nearer. A white hand is held, trembling like the sword that hung by a single hair over the head of Damocles of old, above the head of the mourning girl. It touches the soft, shining hair; another head bends low, and parted lips almost kiss the glossy braids, as they breathe the one word 'Annabella!'

With a faint cry she throws back her head, and face to face she finds herself with her dearly-loved Chatham. Not knowing what she does,—fancying herself in a dream or a fever,—she sinks from the chair upon her knees, and, smothering a scream, covers her face with her hands. Prostrate at the feet of her lover, she knows not how, nor why, the haughty, imperious Anna kneels for a moment. Tenderly he strives to raise her, but the weakness is past; Anna is again the empress. She rises majestically, and is about to hasten out of the room, but with a firm grasp Chatham retains her, and draws her towards the fire. Gently he seats her in the chair he has vacated, and, flinging himself in his turn at her feet,—not as a worshipper, or silly suitor, but in order that he may gaze into her eyes,—and clasping both her hands, exclaims,—

'Tell me, Anna Burton, I conjure you, are you going to marry Nelson Burford?'

The mesmeric fixing of the eyes, and the pressure of the burning hands, commanded truth, and it came.

'No—never,' murmured Anna, with lips quivering and cheeks pale as death.

'Are you engaged to him?'

'Yes—no—no.'

'Yes or no?'

'No.'

'Have you been engaged to him?'

'Yes.'

'Do you love him?'

'No.'

'Why, then, were you engaged to him?'

'I do not know,—I cannot tell.'

'Did you ever love me?—say,—speak,—my life depends on it. My heart will burst.'

'Yes.'

'Say the word again,—Do you love me still?'

'Yes; God knows it.'

'Will you marry me,—share my miserable, deserted fate?'

'I will.'

'If my father renounces me, my friends give me up, and I am poor?'

'I will.'

'You,—the ambitious,—the—the'—

'I.'

'You are mine?'

'Wholly.'

'Will you—will you—go with me—from this very house—at once—to-morrow?—marry me directly—put an end to all this agony, and be mine without consulting friends or relations, as I am yours?'

'Elope, do you mean?'

'Yes; or return to Fairfield and marry from thence?'

'I cannot do that.'

'Which?'

'Return home.'

'Then you will fly with me?'

'Yes.'

'Thank you! God bless you! I can breathe again. My heart! my heart! Happiness is worse than misery to bear. You do not know what I have suffered since I heard that you and Burford were engaged.'

'How did you know it?'

'Lady Mansford wrote to my father, and told him so.'

'Lady Mansford also told me that you were engaged, or nearly so, to Miss Erskine.'

'It was false. I would not have married her for all the gold of India.'

'Why, then, did you go to London?'

'My father sent for me. He had just arrived in England, and, meeting Miss Erskine again, still Miss Erskine, resolved that I should marry her. He had heard of my visit into Wales. He told me so, and said he understood that I had paid it on your account. I could not deny it, but assured him that you had refused me. He said that was equivalent to my disobeying him. He got into a furious passion, and vowed that if I did not at once propose for Miss Erskine, he would withdraw my allowance, and disinherit me. I knew that he had long only wanted an excuse for doing so, and I told him so, declaring that I never would marry Miss Erskine. He ordered me from his house, and I went back to my regiment. I wrote a half

penitential, half reproachful letter to him, but received no answer. I find he has kept his word, and I have nothing but my pay. It is starvation; still many live upon it, and we can economize. Anything is possible with you,—nothing without you.'

'What will the Countess and Lady Georgiana say? I dread them more than any one else, except my sister.'

'Why your sister?'

'Because she will not approve of my conduct to Nelson—or —or anything else.'

'When did you break off your engagement with Nelson?'

'This very day; the letter is in that post-bag.'

'Ah! for my sake? But I would not have them think us dishonourable.'

'The letter was written before I knew that you thought of me still.'

'They must all be made to understand this. I heard you tell my aunt that you had a letter to put into the bag, and resolved to remain here, if the whole night, until you came.'

'I am sure I was born to make everybody belonging to me miserable, Captain Michelson. If I am doing wrong for your sake, you must not let the evil consequences fall on me. I do not know what is right and what is wrong in this case; it is all confused in my mind, and I scarcely wish to unravel it. Yet I know it was wrong to promise to be the wife of another, when I loved you. I know it is wrong to break an engagement, though it would be worse, far worse, to marry with the hand one man whilst my heart is in your keeping. I know it is wrong to let you marry me, under all the circumstances of your position. And Jessie, Pynsent, what will they think? and Captain Burford, and Uncle Timothy, and—and—Nelson? I can never see them again, never! Oh, Captain Michelson! it must not—it cannot be.'

Anna covered her face with her hands, and burst into a passionate flood of tears. Chatham prayed, entreated her for his sake to be calm.

'Anna, dearest Anna, shall I not be more than brother, sister, friend to you? I want no friends but you. Cannot you renounce your home, your friends, for one who will love you till death, and who has so very few to love him that he will find in you alone his only hope and treasure? Think of what you give, not of what you lose. Is it not better to save one from despair or death, than to share the happiness of many? Do not weep so, but think of me—of me.'

'I do, I do; but Jessie,—you cannot tell what her love is,—what it would be to lose it, and to forfeit her esteem.'

'Do you not think, Annabella, that you may be doing her a service by renouncing Nelson? Did you never suspect that she loved him? Did you never notice the sad, pained look, that came from her very heart to her truthful eyes, when he devoted himself to you? My own fears, I suppose, made me more conscious of such things than you were.'

'Can this be? Am I such a selfish wretch, that I could even take her hopes away, without pain to myself on her account? And can you love one who, to gratify her own momentary feelings, has done such things? Oh! I am not deserving of the love of such a heart as yours.'

'Anna, was it not on my account? was it not my fault? Do not upbraid yourself thus. All this excitement will make you ill. We will talk no more now; you must go to rest, and try to compose yourself, looking only on our future happiness, and leaving other matters to take care of themselves. When that letter has reached its destination, and the worst is known at home, we will meet again. Three days from this time, if you will remain in the schoolroom from some excuse or other, I will watch my opportunity, and join you there. You must think over the possibilities yourself meanwhile, and whatever you wish, I will adhere to. If you have the courage to allow me to declare our intentions to my grandmother, I will do so. If you prefer facing your friends at home, I will follow you there; or if you will leave this place with me, four-and-twenty hours shall unite us, without the intervention of friends. Your will is mine. And now, my own dear Anna, be as happy as I am; sleep, and dream gentle dreams of love and joy.'

As Chatham spoke, he tried to throw a tone of hope and mirth into his words, but he performed the operation ill. That letter in the post-bag weighed upon his mind. He esteemed Nelson,—they were friends; and his kind, generous heart shrank at the pain about to be inflicted on *him*. He felt also that the whole affair was false and hollow, and might even be reckoned dishonourable; but he looked at his beautiful Anna, and smothered the scruples that could separate for a moment such a fair creature from him. He lighted one of the library candles, and again entreated Anna to be calm, and to retire. The time-piece struck three. Anna started in affright, and took the proffered candle. Again she put it down.

'Are we doing very wrong? am I very wicked?' she said, with eyes full of tears, that appealed more forcibly to the love

than the reason of him whom she addressed. For answer he pressed her hand, and said,—

'Do we love one another? Where true love is, there can surely be no sin.'

With this fallacious response, he put her candle in her hand and led her gently to the door.

When Anna reached her room, she stood some time with her hands clasped, like one in a dream. The tumult of supreme happiness, and the sense of some heavy calamity, seemed to mingle in her breast. Visions of joy and terror swam before her eyes. To be beloved, as she knew she was beloved, was bliss; but to have the displeasure and sorrow of the friends of her whole life hanging upon that love was anguish. When she regained some degree of composure, and tried to examine into the 'first step' of her many inconsistencies, she found that it was taken when she first encouraged Nelson, whom she did not love, simply because she fancied Chatham was estranged from her.

How many, from pride, pique, vanity, and revenge, have similarly fallen! She could not bear to think of the disappointment and agony of Nelson,—he, so reserved, yet so susceptible! of the anger of Pynsent; the delighted ire of the Captain; and the surprise and sorrow of Jessie. Her name would be a reproach; she would be called coquette—jilt. And would she not deserve it? But then to be married to Chatham! Would not that alone make amends for all the rest? What was the love of the whole world compared with his love? And thus she thought, and thought; negligently laying aside the muslin dress and Christmas ornaments, and unfastening the long black hair, —so long, that it reached far below her waist, and hung about her face like night around the moon.

Happily for us sinful mortals, there is habit in prayer as in everything else. Those who have lisped their night and morning prayers at a mother's knee in infancy and childhood, and have felt it a kind of duty to hurry through them in boyhood or girlhood, still preserve the practice in more advanced years, even though the spirit within them be dead to the efficacy of the words they breathe. Numbers who are careless about religion, and pass their lives in a 'vain shadow,' or in merely worldly pursuits, still kneel by their bedsides at morn and eve, to say the words they have been accustomed to say to the great Giver of all good things. It may be they take His great name in vain, by using it in the soulless way they do; still, better, far better the mere form than none at all. The sinner may be made to think whilst bending before the throne of the

Most High; and one serious thought, like the first link in some great chain, may string itself to another and another, until they shape themselves into the one mysterious whole that shall reach heaven in the form of prayer.

With a heart literally 'divided against itself,' and little inclined to pious meditation, Anna knelt as she used to do, before she lay down upon her bed. Her devotion, like the rest of her acts and deeds, was ever a matter of mere impulse. Sometimes she could pour forth impassioned prayers; at others, they were dead as the bones in the vision of Ezekiel. Now she repeated the words of some prayer that came mechanically from her lips, and concluded by the heedless utterance of our Lord's Prayer. She was about to rise from her knees, when a sudden light struck like an arrow into her heart. Whether the Father of the fatherless, looking upon His prostrate but heedless child, took pity on the orphan according to His promise, and sent that divine ray into her soul of His own tender mercy,—or whether He had listened to the supplication of that far-off sister for the stray white lamb of her affection,—none shall say, but certain it is that the ray pierced through the dark places. Suddenly Anna saw revealed the selfishness of her own heart; and who, that for the first time beholds that selfishness, can behold it unshaken? Such a sight is good, though unutterably painful. The effects of it may pass away, still it is never quite forgotten. She knew that it was self alone she had sought to please, without thought of God or man, sister or brother. She had known but the one idol,—her own beautiful but faulty self. And now she wept real tears of penitence; she sobbed out her sudden sense of the pain she had caused, or might cause. She remembered her sister and Nelson, and seemed to be awakened to new views of them. She saw that she had caused Chatham's rupture with his father, and would probably bring him to poverty. Above all, she was conscious of her forgetfulness of the God whom she had been early taught to worship, and that she had lived for this world and herself alone. We will leave her to her tears and supplications; they are bitter and heartfelt, but, like strong medicine, efficacious to save.

All that evening both the Countess and the Lady Georgiana had narrowly watched Chatham and Anna. They had long known his feelings; they had been doubtful until then of hers, they were so no more: they saw the excited anxiety to please, and to draw him towards her; the expressive delight of her whole manner when she had done so. They saw the sudden change in him. He had been uncommunicative on all points during his visit, therefore they knew nothing of his father's

conduct, and had attributed his melancholy wholly to his uncertainty about Anna. He avoided the subject, and used every possible means to prevent finding himself alone with his aunt; whilst she resolved to speak to him again upon it. She was annoyed with him and angry with Anna, though she could not help confessing to herself that it was Chatham who had sought Anna in spite of prudence and common sense.

During the three following days it would have been evident even to a stranger that some kind of understanding had taken place between them. His unreserved attention to her, his high spirits, his improved looks,—all proved that a change, but not, like Byron's, a melancholy one, had 'come o'er the spirit of his dream.' She too was changed. Her moods were still fitful, like the lightning,—now darting brilliantly through the atmosphere that surrounded her, and vanishing away; now flooding her horizon for a few seconds, and disappearing; or playing with clouds, as if to show the lights and shadows of her varying temperament. But her glance was always soft when she looked at Chatham; her cheek always bright when his eyes met hers. Still she was not happy. The letter and its consequences weighed upon her heart. She seemed to travel with it its two days' journey, and to long to drag the wheels of the coach as it drew nearer and nearer to her home. She knew the post time but too well. When it approached, she rushed out alone into the frosty air and paced the shrubberies. She heard Chatham's footsteps near, but avoided him, as if he had no right to be with her when he was helping her to inflict so much pain. She saw clearly in imagination the letter given to Nelson. She watched the change in his usually firm, severe countenance, from pleasure to rage, passion, anguish. She knew so well how it would be. Would he kill himself? No; men rarely did that for love,—never, she believed. Would he go mad? She could not tell; the strength of his passion was so great. She worked herself into such an agony of fear that she was obliged to return to the house, to her room, and there think of the consequences to him who loved her so well. Then came the evening, and she saw Pynsent giving Jessie her letter. Perhaps the elders were present. She needed no *clairvoyance* to transport herself, body and soul, into that old hall, and watch the effects of her passionate outpourings upon her sister. She saw the painful expression of her usually calm features, the tears in her sweet eyes, the doubt, fear, and perplexity of her mind. Would she read the letter aloud at once? No, she thought not. She would study it again, alone, and then she would fall down on her knees and pray for her,—for her, so selfish, so inconsiderate. She would

not rejoice that Nelson was free once more; she would only feel for him. And at all these truly-pictured scenes Anna could only weep. She was far away, and had caused them all.

CHAPTER XXV.

'*Valentine.* Love is your master, for he masters you;
And he that is so yoked by a fool
Methinks should not be chronicled for wise.
Proteus. Yet writers say, as in the sweetest bud
The eating canker dwells, so eating love
Inhabits in the finest wits of all.
Val. And writers say, As the most forward bud
Is eaten by the canker ere it blow,
Even so by love the young and tender wit
Is turned to folly.'—*Two Gentlemen of Verona.*

'I CANNOT settle anything until I have heard from them; indeed I cannot!' said Anna, when, on the following day, she and Chatham were alone in the schoolroom, according to appointment. She was really unwell, and declined walking.

'But this is over-fastidiousness,' said Chatham. 'You have written openly to tell them the real state of your feelings; you have broken off your engagement with Burford before any interview took place between us, and'—

'But I have not heard how he has received my letter, or whether he accepts my refusal.'

'What else can he do, my dear Anna?'

'He is of a very stern nature, and he may cast all the blame on you; he may think we are both acting dishonourably, and that you have persuaded me to this.'

'And if he does, I am a soldier, and so is he.'

Chatham said this with a defiant air, and Anna trembled.

'I will not make up my mind to anything until I hear, and —and I feel quite sure that I could never stoop to elope from this roof. I could do it better if I belonged to the house; but in my present position, never.'

'But, Anna, what will you do? I have your promise to be mine. You cannot retract that. You say you will not return home. I fear,—at least I fancy'—

'I know what you would say. Your aunt would not choose you to take a poor governess for your bride from under her roof. Of course she would not. With all her nominal Christianity she is not strong-minded, or rather humble-minded, enough for that. She is fluent in her praise of the unworldly. But put her to the

test! Try her! I have felt the change in her manners even since she suspected you liked me. What do you think she would do if she knew the present state of the case? Probably, with *Christian* suavity, give me my dismissal at a moment's notice. They are all alike.'

'You are hard upon her. But will you give me your permission to put her to the test? Will you run the risk of her doing what you say? And then, when all is clear, and she knows your sentiments and mine, will you marry me when you leave her?'

'Yes, I think I can do this. But I must first hear from home. You cannot imagine how dreadful has been the oppression of the past night. If I slept, my dreams were more uncomfortable than my waking thoughts. I actually dreamed that I saw Nelson dying, and heard him upbraiding me as the cause of his death; and Captain Burford was threatening me in the most awful manner; and Jessie was weeping; and all was confusion at Fairfield. And you—and you,—they were tearing me away from you, and declaring that I should never see you again.'

'And you awoke and found it nothing but a dream. You are tormenting yourself foolishly. We cannot command our affections. It was ordained that you and I should love one another, and therefore you could not care for Nelson. We can never love truly more than once.'

'But then—but then—I ought not to have accepted him,—my brother's friend, the son of my father's dearest friend'—

'And promised, almost pledged, to your sister. Look upon him in a different light, Anna. Was he not first false to her, in heart, if not in words? I know he was,—I saw it. If he had not seen you, he would have married her. He could not help it, any more than we can help what we are doing. I am a fatalist in these matters.'

'Jessie would disprove your argument. She would say that whatever is wrong in our nature, or whatever temptations may beset us, we ought to strive against and master.'

'Annabella Burton turned moralist! Those lips were never formed for such dry doctrine. Leave it to your "wisers," and let you and I talk folly. There is time enough for gravity when, Darby and Joan-like, we get grey together. Now, darling Anna, look cheerful before I go away, and I promise you that I will grow good and steady, and talk propriety with you by and by.'

'Captain Michelson, one word more.'

'Anna Burton! if you ever call me Captain Michelson again I will never forgive you.'

'Chatham, then, listen to me. Perhaps you may repent what you are going to do. Hear what I say. If, upon due consideration or consultation with others, you should think it wiser and more prudent to give up this engagement, I shall at once release you from it. One thing I am capable of that is right, and that is to abide by the consequences of my imprudence alone.'

'But I am not capable of allowing you to abide by those awful consequences alone, being too much interested in them myself. You are magnanimous, my dearest Anna; but magnanimity was another of the virtues that they never taught me in my youth, and that I fear I shall never acquire in my age.'

'I hear the children,' said Anna, rising in some alarm. 'You had better go.'

'Indeed I shall not,' replied Chatham, with much *nonchalance*; 'they can come here if they like, I shall not hurt them. They are very nice little people.'

'Oh, Miss Burton, how are you now?' exclaimed Rose, bursting into the room. 'Cousin Chatham! mamma has been asking for you.'

'You see, little Rose,' said Chatham, 'I have taken advantage of your absence to get a lesson in grammar from Miss Burton. We have been construing verbs. Where is your grammar?'

'Here it is, cousin,—that horrid Murray.'

'Ah! the very book! I see they have the proper verbs here as well as in Latin. The verb "To Love," through all its "modifications and derivations" of "number, person, mood, and tense." Aunt Georgiana, come here and listen to my lesson of grammar.'

Lady Georgiana had appeared at the door, and looked surprised at seeing Chatham. She entered, and he continued, unabashed,—

'Verb "To love." "Number," two. "Person," two also, decidedly. "Mood," superlative,—I mean imperative, because it is used for "commanding, exhorting, entreating, or permitting," as "Let me love; love thou, or do thou love; let him or her love; let us love, etc." "Tense or time," present, assuredly,—always present. Am I not right, Aunt Georgey? Do I not understand grammar well?'

'You certainly appear to know something of that verb,' said the Lady Georgiana.

'Oh, that is not half, aunt,' again persisted Chatham. 'They have such moods in this verb. Here is the indicative, which simply indicates the "soft impeachment;" then comes the potential, a most powerful mood, but varied in its influences,—

for instance, "I may, might, could, would, or should love or have loved." What could give greater scope or latitude to the "bewildering dream"? That is my mood.'

'Your mood is a very peculiar one to-day, I think,' said the Lady Georgiana, struggling to conceal her annoyance.

'Tolerably happy, nevertheless,' was the reply.

'I believe we are interrupting lessons just at present,' said the Lady Georgiana; 'if, indeed, you feel equal to having the children this afternoon, Miss Burton?'

'Oh, perfectly, I thank you,' was Anna's reply; and her guests left the room.

'Chatham, I really think you are more hare-brained than ever,' said the Lady Georgiana, when they were walking down the passage.

'Why? Because I am a better grammarian than I used to be, and have learned to understand the verb "to love"? That is an unjust accusation.'

Chatham would have said more, but he respected Anna's desire to receive letters from home, and resolved to wait till they came.

'I will join you shortly, aunt,' he added, as he suddenly disappeared into his own apartment.

The very day that Anna expected to hear from Fairfield was that previous to the one on which Chatham was compelled to leave Plas Ayron. When he got out of bed that morning, he felt himself, as the Americans would say, 'in a fix.' He wished to settle all his plans for the future before he went away, but it was impossible to do so, unless he could manage to remain some days longer. He could not venture to ask for more leave of absence, therefore what was he to do? He suddenly felt very poorly. It was a curious transition from a state of anxious thought to one of nervous excitement. Any one who had seen him, five minutes before, meditating, with a razor in his hand, before the looking-glass, and apparently in good health, would have been surprised to behold him stalking up and down the room, apparently out of his mind. Now he puts one hand on the other to feel his pulse; now he places it on his heart; again he presses his forehead.

'Violent palpitation of the heart, and feverish headache, will be best,' he mutters. 'I have them often enough, and my pulse is always quick; moreover, it will have time to subside against he comes. I declare I *have* a slight headache, and *am* rather feverish. As to my heart, it always beats very violently. There is quite enough for a case.'

Chatham threw down the razor, took off such garments as

he had put on, and jumped into bed. No sooner had he got in than he was out again, and put a decanter of water and a glass by his bedside, together with a small bottle of drops that he was accustomed to take when he suffered from palpitation of the heart. He was soon in bed again, and rang the bell violently. The butler made his appearance.

'Saunders,' began Chatham in a feeble voice, 'I have been very ill. Those dreadful palpitations! they will kill me sooner or later. Nothing relieves me this morning. I really think I must have Dr. Jones. Could you send for him without alarming the Countess or Lady Georgiana? I have had such a night!'

'Bless me! bless me! you look uncommon ill. I will send directly, sir. Can I do anything, sir?'

'No, thank you, Saunders. If you would just send at once. How long is it before the doctor can arrive?'

'About an hour, sir, if he is at home when the messenger gets to town.'

'Then pray send, but do not alarm the house. Oh, these spasms!'

Here Chatham made an awful face, that so frightened Saunders as to send him from the room in a moment, and thence to despatch a messenger for the doctor. He soon returned.

'Are you better now, sir?' he asked.

'A little, Saunders,—very little. O dear!'

'Don't give way, sir; they will be better by and by. A little brandy, sir? Better let me ask my lady for something; she knows what's good for those sort of complaints.'

'I will have a cup of strong coffee and a little dry toast. These attacks exhaust me so much that I am obliged to eat and drink to support nature.'

'Try an egg, sir,—a beaten egg.'

'I cannot bear beaten eggs; but perhaps I could swallow a boiled one. Oh, this pain!'

Another fearful contortion of the face sent Saunders off again to see whether the messenger was gone. He returned accompanied by Lady Georgiana.

'My dear Chatham, what is the matter?' she began.

'Confound that fool Saunders!' murmured Chatham, when he heard his aunt's voice. 'Only an attack of spasms. Do not be alarmed, my dear aunt, but I thought it best to send for Dr. Jones.'

'He is only a surgeon, Chatham, not a physician. Shall we send off to Cardigan for a physician?'

'O no! by no means. I dare—say—they—will—pass. Oh! such sudden twinges!'

'Let me feel your pulse.'

Here Saunders, who had previously left the room, returned with coffee and toast.

'If you will leave me now, I will drink a cup of coffee and try to sleep. I hope I shall soon be better, but they make me so very weak for days.'

'You do not look very ill, either,' said the Lady Georgiana. 'I hope you are not alarmed?'

'These spasms always alarm me. But I cannot talk jus at present.'

'Let me get you a sedative.'

'There is my remedy,' said Chatham, pointing to the bottle on the chair, 'but it has wholly failed. I will wait till the doctor comes.'

'Breakfast is waiting, my lady,' said Saunders. 'I will attend to Captain Michelson.'

'Oh, pray go, my dear aunt; you will alarm my grandmother if you remain here.'

'Promise to send for me if the spasms return.'

'Certainly; I surely will.'

The Lady Georgiana went away, and Chatham sat up in bed, rising with apparent effort. It was, however, without any apparent effort that he drank his coffee, and ate his eggs and toast, although he assured Saunders that he did it purely from principle. It is strange how many invalids make very good meals upon that same 'principle!' it is evidently easy of digestion. When he had finished his breakfast, he told Saunders that he would try to sleep, and made himself comfortable for that purpose. He either slept, or feigned sleep, for nearly an hour, and when his aunt crept on tip-toe into the room, was breathing heavily, and seemingly with difficulty. She crept again out of the room, and when she was gone the head rose slowly from underneath the sheets.

'I really am not well, and my heart is slightly affected,' he said. 'I wonder how I look!'

He jumped out of bed, and stood before the glass.

'Rather too well, I fear,' he continued in soliloquy. 'Palish, but not pale enough for so violent an attack.'

He began to put his whiskers into all kinds of curious shapes, and to ruffle his fine black locks. A horse was heard tearing up the drive: he was in bed again in a moment. In less than five minutes more, Dr. Jones, the country apothecary, was feeling his pulse.

'I am better now,' said Chatham feebly, 'but these heart attacks are dreadful whilst they last.'

'Ah! surely! yes!' ejaculated Dr. Jones, his hand on the pulse, and his eye on the minute-hand of his watch. 'Subsiding; no alarming symptom in the pulse, rather quick still.'

'You should feel them during the attack,' groaned Chatham, turning up the whites of his eyes.

'Very bad, sir, eh? I suppose so. Subject to these attacks?' asked the doctor.

'Yes, very. They leave one so awfully weak.'

'A good deal of indigestion, I imagine; the pulse does not vary much,' said Dr. Jones. 'Let me look at your tongue. Ah! thank you; that will do,' and he shook his head at sight of the tongue,—why, Chatham could not imagine. 'How long have you been subject to heart complaint?'

'Ever since I can remember; but it is always the same,—the doctor never arrives till the attack is past or passing, and is never a fair judge.'

'Oh, cause and effect, sir; we judge of causes by their effects. Nervous temperament, I should say?'

'Awfully,' said Chatham, with an unexpected twinge of the muscles of the face; 'so sensitive that I can scarcely bear any one to mention my nerves. Cause and effect, I suppose, doctor?'

'Precisely. Did you ever consult any eminent practitioner?'

'Half London, but to no purpose.'

'How strange!' said the doctor sagaciously. 'It seems to me such a very clear case; but those dons don't always see straight;' and here he muttered several Latin words, too hard for a soldier to understand.

'I feel that if I could be under your care for a week,' said Chatham, 'I should get well. I have such confidence in your skill, from all I have heard my aunt say of you.'

'Much honoured! her ladyship always very kind, I'm sure. I think I could set you up in a week.'

'The misfortune is'— said Chatham, rising in the bed, and suddenly sinking back again,—'oh, this weakness!—the misfortune is, that I am compelled to return to my regiment at once.'

'Impossible, sir! it might be your death.'

'Such are the hard rules of the army,—unless, indeed, you thought it right to send a sick certificate.'

'Of course I do. I would not answer for the consequences,' said the doctor, getting up and walking about the room in some wrath.

'There is no time to lose, then,' said Chatham, 'since it must be sent by this very post. There are writing materials on that

table, if you will take the trouble. How talking does exhaust one!'

'Pray keep quiet. I will write at once;' and, with all the 'pomp and circumstance' of office, Dr. Jones took a pen from the inkstand. It was full of ink, and slit half through; he carefully wiped it in the tail of his coat, abstracted a penknife from his pocket, and began to mend it. With his elbow on the table and his consideration cap on his mind, he slowly wrote his certificate, rose, and presented it to Chatham. Nothing could be more satisfactory to the invalid, inasmuch as it testified to his being in a very dangerous state from heart complaint. Chatham began to grow nervous, and to fancy that his sham illness had been turned into a real one as a judgment upon him. He put a guinea into the hand of the doctor, who again began deliberately to count his pulse. Excitement and exertion had quickened them. Dr. Jones shook his head, rose hastily, saying, 'We must put a stop to this,' and quitted his patient.

Lady Georgiana met him in the hall.

'What do you think of Captain Michelson, Mr. Jones?' she asked.

'Nothing very alarming, my lady; we shall set him up with care and time. Requires great quiet; tendency to disease of the heart; weakness and unnatural excitement; pulse quick, feverish; —but a week's doctoring and dosing will do wonders. I have written his sick certificate, so we shall have time. If your ladyship would send at once for medicine, I should be much obliged.'

A messenger was forthwith despatched, and returned in due course of time with a whole basket of drugs. Lady Georgiana seized upon them, and took them herself to Chatham.

'Two of these pills to be taken at once; three tablespoonfuls of this mixture every four hours,' she read aloud to the invalid.

'I cannot swallow pills,' said Chatham; 'I never could. I wish I had told him so.'

'You must! or would you rather take the mixture first, and the pills in an hour?'

'I really do not see how I can swallow either, I am such a baby in the matter of medicine.'

'I will certainly call my mother,' said the Lady Georgiana, smiling. 'Do you remember that you used to be half drenched by her when you were a boy?'

'Well, I will make an attempt to swallow the pills, but you need not be at the trouble of making yourself sick by watching me.'

'I have no weakness of that kind, my dear Chatham.'

He perceived that there was no remedy, and accordingly swallowed two of the bitterest pills he had ever slipped down his most unwilling throat.

'You are to be kept quite quiet, so I will leave you for the present,' said Lady Georgiana. 'You shall have some arrowroot or sago by and by.'

'I cannot drink slops,' said Chatham, 'and I believe I require great support in these attacks. Thank you, my dear aunt; I think I had better talk no more just at present.'

Lady Georgiana left the room once more, and Chatham blessed his luckless stars that she was gone. He procured a book from the table, and was deep in the trials of 'Jeanie Deans,' when he heard his door creak in about half an hour's time, and once more saw his aunt appear.

'Chatham, I am sorry to disturb you,' she said, 'but it is time that you should take your mixture.'

'Confound the mixture!' muttered Chatham under the bedclothes, already feeling rather sick from the effects of the pills.

When he looked up, there was his aunt, with a glassful of the nauseous ingredients in one hand and an orange in the other. He had no choice: he must pay the penalty of his cheat, and swallow some of the bitters as well as the sweets of the god Cupid. He made such a grimace that his aunt laughed heartily.

'Excuse me, Chatham, I could not help it; you must not be ill long, or your face will be turned inside out.'

'Something else will,' growled Chatham.

No sooner was his aunt's back turned than he put his watch on half an hour. He tried to read in vain. He had no longer occasion to sham illness: he was so dreadfully sick, that he believed Dr. Jones had poisoned him. Never had he looked at his watch so anxiously before. Saunders came with his lady's arrowroot, and his own, or more properly the cook's, little *recherché* omelette. Chatham could touch neither.

'If I get out of this,' he murmured when again alone, 'I vow I will never act, much less speak, a lie again as long as I live. This is the first and the last. Anna! Anna! if you cost me as much in wedded life as you have in single, I shall heartily repent marrying you.'

Three hours, or rather two hours and a half passed, and Chatham poured out the three table-spoonfuls of the odious mixture, got out of bed and threw it under the grate amongst the ashes; then he stirred the fire over it, and effectually con-

cealed all traces, returned to his bed, and put the glass by his side.

'Now, Chatham, it is time for your mixture,' said Lady Georgiana, when the actual three hours had intervened.

'I have taken it, I thank you,—I mean it is gone,' said Chatham, the first half of his speech having been said aloud, and the last under the bedclothes.

'But it is not time.'

'Past, by my watch.'

'There must be some strange alteration in the clock. How do you feel?'

'As sick as a hundred dogs, I should think.'

'Have you had any return of palpitation?'

'None whatever.'

'The children send their loves. They are dying to come and see you, and making themselves miserable about you.'

'Oh, pray let them come by and by. Is the post in?'

'I think it has just come. I will go and open the bags.'

When Lady Georgiana was gone, Chatham again jumped out of bed, and wrote a few lines to Anna, explaining matters, and begging her to send a reply through the children. He put his note between the leaves of a book, wrapping the book carelessly in paper, but tying it round with twine. By and by a tap at the door was followed by Rose and a letter. To his little visitor he gave the book for Anna, and told her to ask Miss Burton for the second volume, if she had done reading it, and to bring it to him in the evening, by which time he knew she must have received and digested letters from home.

In due haste and importance came, in the course of the afternoon, Dr. Jones. He pronounced the symptoms favourable, the fever abated, and the pulse slackened. Chatham no longer required to feign, for he was unquestionably indisposed.

In the evening the children came, and brought the book.

'Why did Miss Burton wrap it up, cousin?' asked Violet.

'Perhaps she did not think it a proper book for you to look into,—the reason that made me wrap up mine.' Chatham bit his tongue at the sudden recollection that he was uttering another falsehood.

'O no! Miss Burton knows that we would not read books she tells us not to read,' said Violet.

'I must send you away now, dears, because I cannot talk much. Thank Miss Burton for the book.' The children departed.

Chatham opened the little parcel. Inside the leaves of the book were two letters, on which was written 'Read this.'

Chatham opened, with fear and trembling, the letter directed in a man's hand. It contained the one simple but powerful sentence :—

'False deluding Annabella, you are free.

'NELSON BURFORD.'

Underneath this was written in pencil by Anna, 'Do what you like.'

'Short and sweet,' said Chatham, with a real sharp pain at his heart. He felt deeply for Nelson, and he knew that all was not right. He opened the other letter, which was from Jessie. This was written in great agitation; there was evidently a powerful conflict in the mind of the writer. 'You have been wrong, very wrong, dearest Anna, and right, very right,—wrong to accept one you did not love, and right to break off your engagement when you found that you could not love him. But if this has been all done from mere sudden passion, pique, fancy, vanity,—anything but reason and right principle,—it is all, all wrong. I do not clearly see the right, for some one must suffer. Poor Nelson! I have not seen him for a long time; I am still less likely to see him now, but I know what he will endure. Oh, Anna! could you not love him?—him, so gentle, yet so firm; so honourable and so brave; so tender and at heart so loving? You do not know him, or you could not have treated him thus. He is not like other men: the more reserved his nature, the more sensitive; and, once deceived, mortified, wounded, he will never, never be the same again. He may grow morose and misanthropic, and will, I am almost sure, be lost to his friends for ever. Anna, Anna, what has your beauty done! My poor, poor sister!'

'What has her beauty done?' murmured Chatham, as he pondered over Jessie's letter. 'Made a conquest of two hearts as different as can be. Nelson is all Jessie says,—the soul of honour, gravity, constancy, reserve, kindness, bravery, and particularity; I, his successful rival, have some honour too, but am the soul of mirth, candour, inconstancy, selfishness, and carelessness. Lewis Gwynne, again, is the soul of stiffness, starchness, stupidity, vanity, and priggishness. Yet she has brought us all three fairly at her feet. And all for what? I cannot tell myself. Not great talent nor great sense, though she has enough of both for a woman, but simple fascination. What is there in this one daughter of that tempting and doubtless equally beautiful Mother Eve, to have such power? and will it not still exist when we are married? and am not I the most jealous of created beings? But she loves me,—at least I think she does, for she never gave

me any decided demonstrations. And here am I fibbing and feeling as sick as if I was at sea, and giving up my horses, and offending my friends, and getting lackadaisical, and making a fool of myself,—and all "because a woman's fair," as the song says. But "what's the odds as long as you're happy?" So my mind is made up, and "*allons notre train, vogue la galère*," as that prince of love-makers, Molière, hath it. And I don't care what happens. And if 'don't care' *was* eaten up by lions, as the spelling-book said, why, one can only be eaten up once in one's life, and it does not matter much when the meal is made; so love and Anna for ever!'

CHAPTER XXVI.

'Joys unexpected, and in desperate plight,
Are still most sweet, and prove from whence they come;
When earth's still moonlike confidence in joy
Is at her full: true joy, descending far
From past her sphere, and from that highest heaven
That moves, and is not moved.'—GEORGE CHAPMAN.

'I AM five or six and twenty, Aunt Georgiana,' said Chatham the following morning, seated in the easy-chair in the library and looking rather poorly, 'and I do not see why I may not fall in love if I have a fancy that way, as well as my fathers before me.'

'I daresay you may, and have fallen in love with impunity a hundred times,' said the Lady Georgiana; 'but I return to my old starting-point, and say that you ought to have some respect for young ladies' hearts, as well as your own.'

'I have the greatest possible respect for all sorts of palpitations; I am too well acquainted with their motions not to have a feeling in common with them all. But to be serious, what should you think of my getting married?'

'It would depend on circumstances, as such matters generally do.'

'Be so good as to explain what you mean by "circumstances."'

'The circumstances that would make me think your marrying prudent would be your making a sensible match.'

'And now, be so good as to explain what you mean by a "sensible match."'

'A sensible match, in my opinion, would be a lady of your own rank in life, with sufficient fortune to make up for your own lack of it.'

'Surely it is not the Lady Georgiana Meredith that is speak-

ing,—that usually disinterested lady, whom I have always heard descant so warmly on the beauty and fitness of mutual attachment, suitability of disposition and reciprocity of sentiments, etc. etc.'

'All that is understood.'

'Then, supposing I should choose to marry a lady who had not the "expressed" part of the "good match" to boast of, but all, and a vast deal more than the "understood," what should you think?'

'That you would be very unwise and imprudent, and would probably bring down much misery on her and yourself.'

'What if it is signed, sealed, and settled?'

'That the sooner it is unsigned, unsealed, and unsettled, the better.'

'All women are alike; not one of you will allow any one but her own individual self to marry without station and money. I always looked upon you as a perfect woman until now, because I thought you unselfish.'

'I am anxious for your welfare, Chatham.'

'That is only to be assured by my marrying a woman that I could love. I should become the merest *roué* and *vaut-rien* in existence, if I was mated with one I did not care for. I know all your arguments, aunt, good and bad; but it is useless beating about the bush when we each know the game the other is aiming at. I have loved Annabella Burton from the first moment I saw her; and it is my full intention, having, I am happy to say, gained her consent, to marry her.'

This downright declaration confounded Lady Georgiana. At last she said,—

'Chatham, you cannot be in earnest!'

'For the very first time in my life, yes, I am in earnest!'

'You cannot, of course, expect me to countenance such an engagement,—here! under my roof! my nephew—and—and—my governess!'

Lady Georgiana was growing very red.

'As to your "countenance," you must wear that as you think proper.'

'Ungrateful! deceitful!'

'Not Miss Burton; she has only within the last two days accepted my proposal; and had she been as anxious as I am, she would have been on the road to Gretna, or some less romantic church, at this moment.'

'This is too absurd, Chatham. You know that your father would not consent to such a match, and that you are dependent upon him.'

'He has kindly removed that obstacle.'

'How?'

'By removing his allowance, and leaving me independent.'

'Have you quarrelled?'

'I suppose so, since he politely declared his intention of cutting me off with a shilling if I did not marry that "good match," Miss Erskine. I asked him—with Sheridan, I think it was—whether he "chanced to have the shilling in his pocket," as I sadly wanted one, and he got into a furious passion, and so we parted. Since this I have been living on my pay and my own resources.'

'And you mean to marry Miss Burton?'

'Yes.'

'And starve with her?'

'I ardently hope not, because I always think death by hunger must be the most painful of all deaths, and shooting oneself would be better.'

'I wish she had never come here. At all events, it is impossible for her to remain.'

'Justice and moderation again! Her coming here had nothing to do with it, for I should have seen her at Fairfield; and I trust she will soon be, as my wife, under no obligation to any one for the shelter of a roof.'

Chatham rose from his chair and walked out of the room. His aunt, without waiting, according to her usual good habit, to think before she acted, also walked out of the room, and went direct to the schoolroom. She told the children that she wished to speak to Miss Burton, and that they might go to their grandmamma.

Anna felt that her hour was come, and tried to nerve herself for it. She sat erect and haughty, with a slight glance of defiance in her eyes; whilst the Lady Georgiana, naturally a nervous woman, fidgeted with her gold chain, and looked perseveringly on her lap.

'Miss Burton,' began the latter, carefully avoiding the defiant glance that she felt was ready to beam upon her, 'my nephew, Captain Michelson, has given me to understand that he is engaged to you. If this is the case, you will excuse my saying that it is so imprudent a thing, that it could not possibly meet with the approbation of any one member of our family.' Pause, but no remark from Anna. 'As this must have been carried on under my roof, I think it my duty to speak to you freely on the subject, and to tell you that I wholly disapprove of it, and that I consider you to have acted a very deceptive part.'

'I can have been guilty of no deception,' here burst forth Anna, 'since I have not seen Captain Michelson alone more

than once or twice since I have been with you; and it appears that, almost immediately after those two private interviews, he spoke to you upon the subject.'

'Of course, Miss Burton, you are aware that Captain Michelson is wholly dependent on his father, and that he is not likely to approve of his son's marrying at present.'

'I am perfectly well acquainted with Mr. Michelson's disapprobation of anything that his son may like, and know him so well myself that I feel quite convinced he would never consent to my becoming his daughter-in-law.'

'And would you be the means of severing father and son?'

'Your ladyship is not probably aware that I have long been the means of severing father and son, and that without the fault either of Captain Michelson or myself,—if, indeed, those may be called severed who were never united.'

'I do not understand you, Miss Burton. I know that Mr. Michelson has quarrelled with Chatham, because he has refused to marry Miss Erskine on your account.'

'I do not suppose that Captain Michelson would have married Miss Erskine even had he never had the misfortune to see me. But this is only the ostensible cause of Mr. Michelson's anger. He would have married me himself, and therefore was enraged at the thought of his son's doing so. He is a proud, vain, pompous, selfish man, who never cared for any one but himself; and I wonder how any person knowing him could even name him. He jilted my own aunt, and afterwards, in his own house, proposed for me, or rather, condescended to give me to understand that he was going to do me the honour of marrying me. I believe he soon found out that the Burtons have been for centuries a race of the true gentle blood, that scorn alike the vulgar condescension and the still more vulgar scorn of the great. We are poor, but we are proud; and in our native county no man would be considered to degrade himself by an alliance with the Burtons and Pynsents.'

Lady Georgiana had never seen Anna in one of her magnificent moods before, and she was astonished. She felt, moreover, a little afraid of the young lady when she saw her flashing eyes and majestic air, and heard her rapid enunciation of the proud words she uttered. Still her usually mild ladyship was not one to be easily put down when once she was set up. Your placid people rarely are: they generally manage to get the last and the best of a dispute. She let Anna have time to recover her breath, and then she said, somewhat hastily for her, 'We are not speaking of degradation, Miss Burton, but of propriety;

neither are we talking of what has been, but of what is. If you were to use your judgment, you must know that Captain Michelson, with no income but his pay, would be doing a mad thing to marry any girl without fortune.'

'I should think,' said Anna, 'that he is the best judge of what is good for him. He is of age, and his own master, therefore need not appeal either for advice or assistance to any of his relations. As to me, I am not without fortune. My father left my sister and myself a provision when we marry, because he did not choose that his daughters should be taken upon charity. I did not force myself upon Captain Michelson's notice: he sought me out, and has more than once wished me to engage myself to him, but I have refused. I told him that the Lady Georgiana Meredith would be the first to oppose his wishes, and I was right.'

'You certainly were right; and I must further assure you that in my house I cannot allow this affair to proceed any further. At home, with your relations and guardians, you can of course act as you think proper.'

'I understand you, Lady Georgiana. I knew you would dismiss me as soon as you found that Captain Michelson thought seriously of me. I am quite ready to go at once,—to-morrow, if you will. My slight services for the last two years have been sufficiently rewarded, and of course friendship could not exist where the disparity of rank and fortune is so great.'

'You use harsh language, Miss Burton, but it does not alter my determination. If you are resolved to marry Captain Michelson, I again say that it is with the disapprobation of his family, and therefore I cannot permit him and you to remain together here.'

'I have frequently heard your ladyship talk of the power of strong mutual attachment to make life happy, and of the misery of married life without it; I have heard you instance yourself and your sister, Captain Michelson's mother, as examples of both cases; and I have heard you declare that, if no moral objection existed, you would never thwart your children's inclinations, or force them into an unnatural channel. You do not, then, carry your philanthropy beyond your home circle,—you exclude your nephew and—and—your governess. If I were in any other position, you probably would admit me within the enchanted ring; but as I am, I am born to suffer, you suppose, and must bear my lot patiently. Do you not think that Captain Michelson may be made as miserable as his mother if he marry for rank and fortune; and that I may

be capable of as great happiness as you or your children if I marry for love?'

Lady Georgiana knew there was truth in all that Anna said, but she evaded her direct thrust by saying, as she rose and left the room, 'We are both of us too much excited to talk calmly over this matter now. I will see you again, when you have considered it more coolly.'

Whilst Anna reflected, in no very Christian spirit, upon Lady Georgiana's words, that lady went to her mother, and poured out all the grievances from beginning to end. The Countess heard her without interruption, and, when she had finished, allowed some little time to elapse before she spoke. At last she said, 'My dear Georgiana, I fear that you have been over-hasty, and unlike yourself. Remember that Miss Burton is young; that she is beautiful and of good birth; that she has never been used to unkindness or ungentle treatment; above all, that she is under our protection. How can you send a lady away from your house in such a manner and for such a cause? If she had a hundred lovers, and they were all brothers and nephews of yours, you could not do it, and would not, I am sure, had you considered before you spoke. You could not so dismiss a servant, unless she had robbed you or committed some great moral misdemeanour. Miss Burton has done her duty by the children; has been kind and obliging to you, tender and affectionate to me. She has conducted herself always as a lady. If Chatham has fallen in love with her, it is not her fault. It is all simply very natural. Both young, handsome, agreeable, light-hearted, and ingenuous; neither counting costs or looking beyond the present moment. The fault is mine. Like a vain old fool, I thought Chatham had come and remained for my sake, whereas he had a stronger and more lovely attraction. Unsay at least what you have said about Miss Burton's quitting us at once, and we will think and talk of the rest another time.'

Lady Georgiana had been always accustomed to listen to her mother's opinions with the utmost deference. She rarely contradicted her; and her usual custom was, if she differed greatly with her, or felt irritated at anything she said, to leave her as soon as an opportunity offered: so, as soon as she obtained the mastery over herself, she hastily and very unceremoniously withdrew to her own apartment.

It would have been curious for a stranger to peep into the different rooms on the second storey of that large house, and glance at their inmates. In the first there is the Countess, looking grave, but not unhappy. In the second, the Lady Georgiana,

walking up and down the room in no very agreeable mood. In the third, Chatham, with a face like a thunder-cloud, biting his nails, and vowing vengeance upon all his relations. In the fourth, Anna, under bolt and bar, crying and sobbing, more apparently from passion than from grief.

Some time elapses before any outward change takes place. What revolution has been going on inwardly cannot be guessed. The Lady Georgiana is the first to give symptoms of a revulsion of feeling. She is seen to walk irresolutely down the passage, and to stop at the schoolroom door. Here she is soon met by Violet, who runs up to her, and asks, 'What is the matter with Miss Burton, mamma? She has been crying for a long time.'

'Where is Miss Burton, Violet?'

'In her room, mamma.'

Her ladyship goes to the room, and, hesitating as she reaches the door, colours and trembles slightly as she knocks, and asks for admission.

'I will come shortly,' says Anna from within.

'May I not come in for a few moments?' asks the Lady Georgiana.

The door opens, and Anna, with red eyes and clouded brow, admits her unwelcome visitor, who, going towards the fire, begins to fidget with an ornament on the mantelpiece.

'Miss Burton,' said the latter, 'I am very sorry that I should have hurt your feelings and offended you. I am still more sorry that I could have spoken to you in so thoughtless a manner of leaving my house. Will you consider those words unsaid, and at least remain with us as long as shall be convenient and agreeable to you to do so?'

Oh, the sudden change in the face of Anna! Have you seen a frowning, cloud-capped rock instantaneously illuminated by sunshine? Have you remarked that the dark sides become bright, and glow with hues of red and gold,—that a thousand wild flowers, and pink and green mosses, and yellow lichens, before concealed, start into sight, perhaps glittering in diamond dewdrops? So was it with Anna. The cloud melted into the sunlight; the dewy tears, hitherto studiously concealed, gleamed upon the eyelashes, and the face grew radiant with grateful feeling.

She was disarmed; she could not speak. But Lady Georgiana saw the change, and hastily added, to avoid seeming to expect conciliation or apologies,—

'You will, I am sure, forgive what I said in the excitement of the moment. I am always sorry when I allow sudden feeling or passion to make me forget that humility which our Saviour taught us.'

'Can you forgive me?' murmured Anna. 'I see now that I have been thoughtless, and rude, and unjust towards you. I am very sorry; but still I have promised, and cannot allow you to suppose that I can ever alter.'

'We will not renew the subject now,' said the Lady Georgiana, again fidgeting with the ornament on the mantelpiece, and repressing a rising inclination to irritation; 'I hope we shall meet as usual.' She held out her hand, and Anna pressed it lovingly.

'Do not think me ungrateful,' said Anna; 'I am not so at heart. I thank you for all your kindness and patience with me. Wherever I go, I shall always carry with me the remembrance of the consideration you have shown me, and the home you have given me.'

Here she burst into tears. Lady Georgiana begged her to compose herself, brushing a tear from her own eye as she did so; for she felt a sincere affection for the beautiful but wilful girl she saw before her.

The evening was an awkward one to all but the Countess, who seemed composed and happy, and who was more than usually kind to Anna. Chatham, who had industriously kept to his room all the afternoon, looked gloomy and out of temper; and that night, when they were all supposed to be at rest, a letter was brought by Ruth to Anna from him, written in no very kindly spirit. He urged her to marry him at once, and so to avoid all the pride and absurdity of his 'ridiculous, puritanical, and unnatural aunt.'

Anna was now more unsettled than ever, and was almost inclined to follow Lady Georgiana's wishes, and do away with the engagement altogether. But she was too much in love for such a sacrifice, so she resolved to see Chatham, and talk the matter over with him. She was supremely miserable; for not only did she feel that she had offended all her own friends, and acted ill by Nelson, but she was now causing Chatham to offend his friends, and to do a foolish action.

The next day she had a long private interview with him, during which she shed tears, and he grew angry, because she would not come to a decision. It was interrupted by the indefatigable doctor, who had come regularly twice a day to see his patient, and under whose surveillance Chatham was beginning to be really ill. After his departure Chatham went to see his grandmother, who drew from him, gently and judiciously, all his feelings for Anna. Having heard him to the end, she bade him ring the bell. When her maid came, she told her to ask Miss Burton to be kind enough to come to her. Anna appeared immediately, and blushed and hesitated as she saw Chatham.

'Come in, my dear,' said the Countess, looking kindly at her. 'But no; perhaps you will first tell Georgiana that I want her?'

Anna obeyed, and soon returned with that lady.

'Come here,' said the Countess to Anna, pointing to the low stool at her feet. 'I have something to say that nearly concerns you all. I am an old woman, and cannot, in the course of nature, be long in this world. It would not have surprised me, had you and Chatham, reckoning upon my probable decease, and the five hundred a-year that must come to him at that period, become secretly engaged to one another; neither would it have surprised me, had you wished for my death. I feel assured, on the contrary, that you would both rather keep me in this world, and be poor yourselves, than lose me, because I believe you both love me.'

'Yes! O yes! yes!' murmured Chatham and Anna in a breath.

'Years ago, Chatham, your mother was sacrificed to Mammon. God only knows the anguish my great error has caused me. I have vowed before God that if I could repair that error I would do so, and now it seems to me that I may in some sort make amends to her for my blindly-committed sin. If I can make you, her only child, happy, I shall die more at peace with myself, and shall believe that she will accept the reparation. Instead, then, of waiting until I die for the small fortune that must come to you, I desire that you shall receive it at once, and, under my sanction, take Annabella Burton for your wife. Stop! do not thank me yet; I have more to say. You are both young, inexperienced, and careless of money; the income you will have will not allow of any extravagance, and unless Mr. Michelson relent, you are never likely to have it increased. You must therefore bear in mind that I give it you with the full expectation that you will live within it, and keep out of debt. If you are happy, I am content.' Here the Countess put her hand on Anna's head, who was sobbing audibly. 'This child will require thoughtful and loving treatment, Chatham. She and you are both undisciplined: you must help to discipline one another. Never allow coldness to estrange you. If you commit faults, which you surely will, do not conceal them from one another. Your dispositions are such, that you would soon be alienated if the ill wind of deceit blow upon you. Remember the homely proverb, "Avoid the first word." It is the first word that leads to the second and the third, as it is the first step in everything that leads to consequences. I think I know you both well; and, with much that is good and amiable, you have much that, indulged, may make you unamiable and wretched. Help one another; God will help those who, in

the married state, help each other. May He bless you both! and when I am gone to my rest, may you have reason to bless my memory for striving to bring you together!'

The tears stole down the cheeks of the aged Countess as she concluded her address; and when Chatham went to Anna's side, and knelt at his grandmother's knees, she put her hand on his head, and with patriarchal simplicity again prayed to God to bless both her children. Anna was sobbing aloud, and ejaculating, 'I do not deserve it,—it cannot be. I am not worthy,—you do not know,' as she hid her face in the Countess's lap. Chatham's heart was too much touched to allow of his uttering words, but he put his arms round his grandmother's neck, and let his grateful but still manly tears fall on her cheek.

Meanwhile the Lady Georgiana drew near to the sobbing Anna, and, stooping over her, whispered again in her ear an entreaty for forgiveness for her unkind words of the previous day.

'It is I—it is I who must ask forgiveness. I do not deserve it; I cannot bear this kindness,' sobbed Anna.

Who has not found kindness harder to bear than unkindness, as Anna did? She could utter no thanks; she could not even raise her head to her friend and benefactress, she could only shed tears at her feet, in token of the gratitude she felt; and when they gently led her to her room, and left her alone there, still she wept as she had never wept before. Joy, sorrow, remorse, a sudden consciousness of her own feelings, and of the weight of undeserved benefits cast upon her, all made her feel that intense pain in pleasure, which is more difficult to bear than actual grief. Happy she must soon have been, had not the recollection of Nelson haunted her at every moment. Alas! so it ever is! the one dark shadow of evil must overcast the good. If we have permitted ourselves one bad action, one deceit, one glaring ingratitude, it is when we are happiest that it comes between us and our joy, to embitter the present, and darken the past.

CHAPTER XXVII.

'I never saw a bridal but my eyelid hath been wet;
And it always seemed to me as though a joyous crowd were met
To see the saddest sight of all, a gay and girlish thing
Lay aside her maiden gladness for a name and for a ring.'
G. M. FITZGERALD.

'ANNA has behaved very dishonourably,' said Pynsent Burton to his sister Jessie. 'Look at her conduct in whatever light you will, it cannot be made clear or clean.'

'We are all faulty, Pynsent,' said Jessie, 'and poor Anna was never strong at overcoming her inclinations; but she is your sister, and you, as her natural guardian, must act a brother's part by her.'

'I should be sorry to consider myself her guardian, Jessie,' said Pynsent, shrugging his shoulders, 'or to have the weight of her indiscretions upon me: I am glad I am not her godfather.'

'But, Pynsent, you must, if only out of respect to those who have so nobly acted by her, accept this invitation,—you must go to her wedding.'

'How can I countenance the marriage of one who has jilted my dearest friend, and probably made him miserable, and certainly made him a misanthrope for life? I tell you, Jessie, that Nelson will never recover the shock he has received. He shuns me as if I was some wild animal. He has never been here since the fatal letter. He scarcely speaks to his own father; and although two months have elapsed since it took place, he looks as ill and wretched as he did the first night.'

'I know it,—at least I can guess it all, Pynsent; still we must do our duty by Anna. It must not be said that our sister was allowed to be married amongst strangers, and none of her own family there to countenance and support her. I knew she never loved Nelson, and, believe me, it is all for the best.'

'I know that, and I know that he was a fool to think of her; but I saw he conceived a passion for her—I cannot suppose it was love—from the first evening that he met her after his return. I wish to heaven she had been as ugly as sin.'

'She is what God made her, Pynsent, and when married, will, I hope, be prudent and happy.'

'Then Captain Michelson must rule her with a rod of iron.'

'Oh, Pynsent, you always mistake Anna! she is only to be led by kindness; and I am thankful to say Captain Michelson is gentle and kind-hearted. But the wedding! It is impossible for me to go alone, who never travelled in my life. It is evident

that the Countess and her daughter are bent on my being present, and on having as many of her family as possible. You are most especially invited by all parties. Nothing can exceed the interest the family take in Anna; and the letter of the Countess to me, in which she insists on defraying all the expenses of my journey, is most considerate.'

'Humph! I suppose we can raise a ten-pound note for this purpose.'

'Not so easily, Pynsent, since you know how difficult it is to raise Anna's thousand pounds; and we are both agreed in resolving that she shall have it.'

'Assuredly! My father willed it; and, thank goodness, we have never touched the money laid by from year to year, ever since his death, for the accumulation of that sum. Michelson has behaved very handsomely in refusing it, but, small as it is, she must have it, even though we starve for it.'

'We shall not be able to reduce Mr. Skinner's debt this year, Pynsent. The hundred pounds we have saved for him must go towards Anna's thousand. How fortunate it is that Captain Burford was such a careful man himself, and at the same time so interested in us, that he began at once to lay by for these portions!'

'Captain Burford is one in a thousand. He too, despite his joy at the match being broken off, is very unhappy about Nelson. I fear they have quarrelled, and, unless something occurs to reconcile them, will part unpleasantly.'

'Part!'

'Yes; I have just heard that Nelson is determined to return at once to India.'

'So much the better; as long as he is here he will only mope and be morose, but, actively employed, he may recover.'

'And *you* say this, Jessie?'

'Certainly. But let us return to Anna. The Countess says she trusts as many of her relations as possible will be present at the wedding, particularly her eldest brother. What an angel that old lady must be!'

'I wish I had such a grandmother, Jessie. Do you think I could persuade Aunt Betsey to such a sacrifice?'

'You are so foolish, Pynsent. Will you persuade yourself to sacrifice your own unkind feelings, and go with me into Wales?'

'Do you think there is any chance of this angel of a Countess giving up her other five hundred a year to her daughter? and, finally, do you think the Lady Georgiana will marry me? The daughter of an earl ran away with a young doctor the other day, and why should not I be one of Fortune's favourites? I will

send to London for a suit of new clothes upon the chance, and come out in boots no bigger than a Chinese lady's. By the by, Jessie, it is nothing but tight boots that caused Miss Maxwell's lameness. What with tight stays and tight boots, we shall not have a young lady left to console us for the ills of life. I mean to write a treatise'—

'Now, Pynsent, be serious: will you go to Anna's wedding?'

'Of course he will!' shouted Captain Burford, entering suddenly. 'I would go myself if it wasn't for Nelson. I really do not know what is the matter with the lad, and, by Neptune, I am come to make a clean breast of it, and show you the "head and tail of my offending."'

'Head and front,' suggested Pynsent.

'It's all the same,' growled the Captain; '*af*-front would be better still. There now, let me sit down first, and spread out my sails a little.'

'Tails,' again suggested Pynsent,—'coat-tails, just as the ladies spread out their dresses.'

'It is a long yarn, but I shall be better when it is spun. When that confounded little jilt of an Anna wrote that letter, Nelson and I were sitting very cosily over the fire. I was making a conscience to myself to try to speak cheerfully about his marriage with Anna, and from the wrong side of my mouth bawling out a few lies; because you know very well, Jessie, that I always meant him for you,—but that's over, I'm afraid. Nelson was very merry, and seemed pleased at my having taken this turn. The truth was, I saw it was no good to keep to the other tack, so I shifted. He was getting confidential, and we were better friends than we had been for some time. Down came the postman's rap louder than usual. I suppose Nelson expected a letter, for he jumped up and answered the door himself. I knew by the joy on his face that it was from Anna. He sat down and opened the letter. I watched him as he read it, feeling angry that a mere child should have been able to obtain such power over a steady, grave fellow. But as he read on, such a change came over his countenance as I never remember to have seen. First he became as pale as death; then he knitted his brow and pressed his teeth and lips closely together; and finally, he seemed as if every muscle of his face became contracted. When he had read to the end, he turned the letter and began it again. But I could bear it no longer. "For God's sake, what is the matter, Nel?" said I. He did not answer. I spoke to him again; but he only shook his head, covered his forehead with his hand, and read on. When he came to the end of the letter again, he groaned slightly.

"Nelson, for God's sake, what is the matter?" said I. He put the letter into my hand, and sat watching me in turn, whilst I read it; which I did as well as I could, for it was vilely written. I suppose the joy I felt, when I found that Anna had fairly broken off the engagement, must have been visible on my countenance. You know, my dear, I could not pretend to be sorry when it was the happiest thing that could have happened to me,—so I thought, at least. I believe I made sundry ejaculations as I proceeded, such as "Quite right!" when she said she had done wrong to accept him; "Little flirt! little jilt!" when she said her affections were another's; "Pshaw! nonsense!" when she spoke of Nelson's feelings; and "The deceitful little baggage!" when she alluded to her own. But the truth was, I was downright overjoyed at the letter, and when I had spelt it through, I could not help shouting "Hurrah, boys!" or some such thing, and getting up and going across to Nelson, and holding out my hand to shake hands with him, saying, "Bravo, Nel! now you see I was right!" Deuce take it, why did I think of right or wrong at such a time? but we are always so glad to find ourselves right. "She isn't worth a thought," said I; "Jessie is worth a hundred of her. You'll be very glad by and by. Shake hands, boy, and let us be friends again." But he did not shake hands. He looked at me as if he thought I was a demon, and said with a voice as hoarse as a wolf's, "Father, are you a brute?" and, snatching up the letter, went out of the room. Now those words, "Father, are you a brute?" have haunted me ever since. I can't forgive them. They are the first ill words he ever said to me, but I shall never forget them. "A brute!" I, who have thought of nothing but his good all his life, and only rejoiced about Anna because I knew it was best for him. Well, we have scarcely spoken since that day. He looks ill and wretched, and mopes and frets. I am sorry for him, but cannot get over those words. He doesn't think about them, I daresay, only of Anna. He has been away twice, and this morning is gone again. He left word that he should be back in a few days, and told me abruptly at breakfast—the only words he spoke—that he should return to India in about six weeks. I made no reply. I tried, but "the brute" stuck in my throat. He ought to apologise for such a speech. He must; I can never have any pleasure with him again till he has; and I am sure I have no pleasure in myself, or anybody else, whilst he is making up his mind. He looks so ill, it is dreadful to see him. I could never have believed that a woman could have made such work with a sober, sedate fellow like Nelson; but women are at the

bottom of all the mischief that ever was done in the world, from its foundation to the present time,—from Mother Eve to Daughter Anna they are all alike, and men are their dupes and victims. You are an exception, you know, Jessie; I always look upon you as a pattern to your sex. And now, little counsellor, what are we to do with Nelson? Pynsent, what is your opinion?'

'That I could not have believed it possible that Nelson could have been such a fool!' growled Pynsent. 'He must get over it soon; he has too much good sense to allow a disappointment of this kind to prey upon his mind.'

'I am afraid,' said Jessie, 'that he has too much feeling to allow him to forget it.'

'But the question is, what are we to do to set him and me to rights again?' asked the Captain. 'I shall leave it to you, Jessie, and I will abide by whatever you advise. Heigho! who would have thought that such a dutiful boy could ever have called his father a brute?'

'But, my dear Captain Burford,' said Jessie gently, 'you must think of the provocation. Nelson had been already injured past endurance, and then you, by seeming to rejoice in his pain, put the finishing stroke to his distress.'

'Fiddlesticks' end, my dear! He must have known that I was not rejoicing in his pain, but merely in his having got rid of a matrimonial engagement that I did not consider suitable for him. Anna was just as much calculated to make him happy as the King of the Cannibal Islands would be to make her happy, or as *he* would be to make her happy; and if he hadn't been worse than intoxicated all the time, he would have known it. *Et tu Brute!* Just read Cæsar's dying words—*Brute* instead of *Brutus*—and you will have Master Nelson's apostrophe. I know he thought me a brute when he said so.'

'It was only the excitement of the moment,' said Jessie; 'and think what he must have felt, to be so aroused.'

'Very well, my dear; I leave it all to you. You must see what can be done to bring us together; but remember, I make no concessions. There is one comfort, when one thinks that 'twill be all the same a hundred years hence. And now, Pynsent, my boy, you must absolutely go to Anna's wedding; your father's daughter shall not be married without the countenance of her relations.'

'But I should not know what to do amongst all those grand people. I assure you, Captain, I should feel like the cow in the china-shop, or the pig in the drawing-room,—very ill at my ease.'

'Not more so than I,' suggested Jessie. 'The very words "Countess" and "Lady Georgiana" make me tremble. I am sure I shall not know how to behave. You must go, if only to support me.'

'Uncle Timothy will support you,' said Pynsent; 'but I could no more witness Anna's marriage with Captain Michelson after her conduct to Nelson, than I could—what simile shall I bring? —yours with old Skinner.'

'You do not mean seriously to declare that you will not accompany me into Wales?'

'I would do anything in the world for you, Jessie, and if you are really afraid to travel alone, I will go to the town with the unpronounceable name and ten consonants, that Anna designates "our post town," with you, but you must then excuse my going further.'

'That would be adding insult to injury,' said Jessie, looking vexed. 'I always knew you were obstinate and determined, but I never thought you absolutely cruel and unkind before.'

'There is the misfortune of boys being left young with nobody to control them,' said Captain Burford. 'Pynsent has had too much of his own way all his life, and now he is as pig-headed as I am, who was left just similarly circumstanced.'

'You may pull me to pieces, or make mince of me between you,' said Pynsent, 'but all the abuse you can utter will not make me go to Anna's wedding. I love her and would do all in my power to serve her, but I will not compromise with conscience. I do not approve of her conduct, and I will not countenance it.'

'I hope you will never have children, Pynsent,' said Jessie; 'you would make a severe father.'

'You need not trouble yourself about that, my dear, for I never mean to marry. You and I will live together as old bachelor and old maid, without interlopers.'

Pynsent remained firm in his resolution. Jessie exhausted all her stock of ill-temper and teasing upon him in vain. Aunt Betsey was vituperative, Uncle James argumentative, Captain Burford authoritative, but Mr. Pynsent continued obstinate. Jessie therefore, with much inward perturbation, started alone.

As she had never been more than twenty miles from home in her life before, the journey was a nervous matter, and the preparations for the visit to the grand place had been nervously made. She was met on the road by her Uncle Timothy, who came laden with presents for the bride elect. He was most anxious to learn the particulars of Anna's change of bridegrooms, having heard of her engagement to Nelson; but Jessie smoothed the matter over

as well as she could, and good simple Uncle Timothy contented himself with a shake of the head and an ejaculation that young people seldom knew their own minds.

They were most hospitably received at Plas Ayron, where they found every one engaged in preparations for the wedding, which was to be quiet, but in all things suitable. Jessie and Anna met in great embarrassment: neither knew what to say. Jessie did not like to make Anna unhappy, therefore concealed her own feelings; and Anna felt so much like a culprit when she was alone with her, that she scarcely dared to show any feeling at all. By mutual consent they avoided speaking of Nelson, although Jessie, at least, thought of no one else. Anna felt and knew the reason of her brother Pynsent's absence, and was more hurt by it than she cared to acknowledge, though she was aware that she deserved it. The Countess told Jessie that she did not think her sister was in such good spirits as, under all circumstances, she might have been. Jessie excused her by saying that excitable people often became depressed under great happiness. She felt as if she was acting or countenancing a falsehood by not avowing the true cause of Anna's depression. The Countess also said that she had made it a matter of favour with Anna to be married at Plas Ayron, because she wished to be an eye-witness of her happiness and that of her nephew. Both the Countess and Lady Georgiana were charmed with the simplicity and good sense of Jessie, and the old-fashioned politeness and gentleman-like bearing of Uncle Timothy. The latter was visiting Lady Georgiana's sick people the very day after his arrival, and making great friends with Violet and Rose, to whose especial care he was consigned. The wedding was to take place on the third day.

Captain Michelson and a brother officer, Colonel Campion, arrived the evening previous to the event. A select party of neighbours were invited to the breakfast, and all was conducted according to the strictest notions of propriety and etiquette. It must not be forgotten that the Countess had written to Mr. Michelson, informing him of all that she intended to do, and, in a civil way, soliciting his countenance. As may be imagined, Mr. Michelson's reply to her letter was harsh and unkind,—that is to say, harsh and unkind in reality, but smoothly worded. He said that as Chatham was marrying contrary to his wishes, he could not be expected to countenance his union. He wished him well, and hoped he would be happy, but as an undutiful son he feared no blessing could rest upon him. The Countess tore his letter indignantly to pieces, and thereupon comforted her conscience by thinking that such a father could not be included in the Fifth Commandment.

A word of the wedding we must say, because everybody likes to hear of weddings. It was a beautiful April day, and the sun shone, and soft breezes blew on it, despite the misdemeanours of the bride. The greatest beauty-sceptic in the world could not have denied the extreme loveliness of Anna in the white veil and orange wreath. She was attired in every way befitting the future grand-daughter of a countess. But who could have thought of the attire when gazing on the face and form beneath? Everybody said that Anna was born to be a queen, so regally she looked. Jessie had a wee bridesmaid on each side, the little Violet and Rose, and Uncle Timothy gave the bride away, and seemed pleased and cheerful.

The rustic church in the park, with its white flower-beplanted graves and ivy-covered arches, was just the place for such a wedding. The Lady Georgiana's school-children were in attendance, strewing flowers, according to the most approved custom, and there were triumphal arches at every hundred yards. An old friend of the Countess's, a dignitary of the Church, performed the ceremony, and was heard to declare afterwards that he had never married so handsome a couple. Anna behaved with the utmost self-possession. She looked flushed, but shed no tears. Jessie, on the contrary, wept copiously, as did the little bridesmaids, —wherefore, they scarcely knew; but I imagine because there is something so sacred and solemn in the marriage ceremony, and so grave in the union of two human beings 'till death them do part,' that it affects even the young and thoughtless.

That Chatham and Anna were supremely happy, no one could doubt; still, when they visited the aged Countess in her boudoir, and received her affectionate embrace and blessing as man and wife, their feelings overcame them. But it was not until Anna found herself alone with Jessie during the interval allowed for a change of attire that she entirely gave way. Then, clasped in the arms of that mother-sister, she sobbed convulsively.

'Jessie, dearest Jessie, can you forgive me? Now, before I go away, let me tell you that I know I have been selfish, wicked, ungrateful; that I have destroyed your happiness, and ruined that of Nelson. Without me you would both have been happy. If you can, tell him that I am conscious how ill I have acted, not in breaking off the engagement,—that was right,—but in forming it. Tell Pynsent that I feel that he was just in refusing to come,—but oh, not kind, not brotherly. You are the only one true and good, and forgiving and angelic, amongst us. May God bless you, Jessie, darling, darling sister! If I had been always with you, I might have been good. It is the consciousness of so many undeserved benefits that makes me

wretched. Had you all been unkind, had I been justly punished for my deceit, I could have borne it; but to be happy beyond my most sanguine wishes makes my heart ready to burst. Pray for me, Jessie, and write—write. I will try to be worthier of you than I have been.'

Jessie held her sister to her heart, and wept with her. She could only murmur, 'I—I have nothing to forgive; God bless you, Anna!' and offer up silent prayers that she might be led to find that peace and strength of mind which the Spirit of God alone can bestow.

No one was surprised at the traces of tears and agitated manner of Anna when she made her appearance below, in her travelling dress. Everybody knew that she was about to part from a dear sister and kind friends, and would have wondered if she had not wept.

Just before the carriage came round that was to convey the 'happy couple' on a short tour through North Wales, previously to their final settlement in or near barracks,—if, indeed, you can call such a settlement final,—Chatham put a sealed packet into Jessie's hand, saying that it was a little joint remembrance from him and Anna, and that she must not open it until they were gone. They departed amongst the cheers of the servants, and the blessings and good wishes of the family and guests. Jessie was obliged to retire for a few moments, to dry her eyes and conquer her rebellious feelings. She opened the packet, and therein found the £1000 in bank-notes that she had brought with her as Anna's dower, accompanied by letters from Chatham and Anna, begging that it might be employed towards paying off the remaining part of the mortgage upon Fairfield. Chatham said that he had burned all the horrid law papers connected with the money, and that no arguments or entreaties should make him receive it again. Jessie could not but feel grateful and glad at this act of munificence, because it not only showed the affectionate nature of her brother-in-law, but also enabled her nearly to accomplish what she had been so long struggling to perform.

Uncle Timothy left the following morning, but Jessie remained a week at Plas Ayron, induced thereto by the entreaties of her new friends, who had taken a great fancy to her. It was rumoured amongst them that Colonel Campion, who also stayed behind, was more than half in love with the unsophisticated Jessie, he having been heard to say that he had never met with so much simplicity and good sense combined in any woman before. He also greatly admired her clear, truthful eyes, and said he was sure that no man could possibly tell a lie in her

presence. When the Lady Georgiana hinted to her Colonel Campion's admiration, and the barely possible result, Jessie got into a great fright, and in her usual straightforward manner assured Lady Georgiana that she never meant to marry, and should be greatly distressed if she thought any one would ask her. She also managed—neither she nor the Colonel knew how—to make him fully understand something of the kind; for if he had conceived any serious intentions, he abandoned them, still affirming that she was the most charming specimen of frankness and simplicity he had ever beheld, and withal the most naturally ladylike person, although devoid of the accomplishments he had been accustomed to admire.

The Countess said of her, 'If there were a few more such girls in the world, to become wives and mothers, what a different world it would become!'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

'They were dangerous guides the feelings—she herself was not exempt—
Truly she herself had suffered—"Perish in thy self-contempt!"
Overlive it—lower yet—be happy! wherefore should I care?
I myself must mix with action, lest I wither with despair.'

TENNYSON.

SEATED at her bureau, with a very unromantic-looking ledger before her, Jessie found herself, a few weeks after her return from the wedding, forgetting her accounts, and soliloquizing something after this fashion. It must not be supposed that she spoke aloud, but her thoughts ran on in this current:—

'I must do something,—but what? They must not part in anger, and Captain Burford is growing more aggrieved every day. If Nelson would come here! But never to have seen him since the letter is worse than fifty painful interviews. It used to be just the same when he was a boy. He always moped, or, as they called it, sulked, until I reasoned with him gently; and then he would soon see the right, and overcome his temper. Can I not recall a thousand such instances, ever since our earliest childhood?—quarrels, above all, with Pynsent, when neither would own himself wrong, until I interfered, and brought both to their senses; and then they came to me to settle differences, and consult upon plans. And now, to be avoided, and perhaps dreaded! But is he not as dear, or dearer to me than ever? Do I not know that his heart is the firmest and truest in the

world? and shall I let it break or corrode without an effort to save? Shall pride, or false shame, or fancied delicacy, prevent my seeing whether the old influence is quite gone? What if he knows that I *love him?* I love his father; I love Pynsent; I love others: they know it,—I do not mind their knowing it. Why should I fear his knowing it,—I who have been called his little wife—his sister—alternately, for years and years? We can never be more to one another now, than we are, and have been. May I not still be the true friend, the tender sister? But what would the world think? what would he think? What matters it, if my own conscience is clear? Is life long enough, or its duration secure enough, to waste it in these vain cavils? I am sure that we ought to do all the good we can in this world; and there cannot be a greater good than to reconcile a father and son, and to raise up a drooping spirit;—but I—can I do this? With God's help I can,—at least I can try. He must not go away from amongst us without at least having kindly feelings towards us. Scarcely more than a twelvemonth ago he returned so happy; and now to go back to India so miserable! And they talk of war in India. Perhaps he may never see us again. His father! he would never forgive himself. At least I will try. May I have courage given me for the attempt, and words put into my heart to speak!'

And so Jessie rose from her bureau, closed her ledger, and shut it in. Then she put on her bonnet and shawl, her heart beating and her hands trembling as she did so. This accomplished, she went to Aunt Betsey, and begged her to detain Captain Burford when he came in from his walk with Uncle James, until she came home from the town, whither she was going. Finally, she called her dog Sandy, the terrier Nelson had given her, and they set out together.

In due course of time they reached Captain Burford's house, the street-door of which being open, Jessie went in without ringing. She stood some time in the hall, endeavouring to collect her thoughts, and to arrange the long speeches she had been composing on the road, but they seemed all to have vanished from her mind. Her little terrier grew very impatient, and began to snap and bark and tug at the skirt of her dress, and to make so much noise that he evidently caused some one to open the library door and look out. This was Nelson, who, perceiving Jessie, appeared astonished, and seemed for a moment uncertain as to the propriety of retiring again. They advanced to meet each other, however, shook hands, and went into the library. Neither of them spoke, but fortunately the delight of Sandy at seeing Nelson rendered words unnecessary.

He first began a series of leaps that demanded attention, and finally a succession of barks, and then an attack upon Nelson's boot, that used to be a favourite amusement, and was now a very fortunate accomplishment. At last he ceased his gyrations, and retired to Jessie's side, who had been engaged in studying the painful alteration of Nelson's face. She could scarcely have believed that a few months without actual disease could have so changed the human countenance. It was not pallor or emaciation, but its dark, morbid, forbidding expression. Jessie felt a sudden fear of Nelson. The stern brow, in which there seemed to be a resolution to suppress mortified feeling, and the rigid mouth, where pride and reserve blended, appeared at once to repel all human love and sympathy. She tried once or twice to speak, but could not, and it was well for her that Nelson occupied himself with the dog. At last the silence became so awkward, that Jessie said the very thing she ought not to have said, and which she felt to be a deceit, which was,—

'Where is your father?'

'I do not know,' was the reply.

The voice was as much changed as the face.

There was another pause, which Nelson broke.

'Will you not sit down and rest, Jessie?'

The little word 'Jessie' brought a sudden flush to her cheek, and almost a tear to her eye.

'Thank you. What warm weather it is for May!' she said, by way of saying something.

'Very,' said Nelson; 'it is quite summer.'

What a blessed scapegoat that weather is! With a weight of love, anguish, anxiety, counsel, and strong, vehement speech lying on the heart and ready for the lips, two friends, whose very life, perhaps, depends on the words spoken, begin to talk of the weather. Who has not often wished the weather at New Zealand, yet, like Jessie, felt it impossible to call up any other subject?

'I think we shall have thunder,' said Jessie, hating herself for her folly.

'There does seem to be a good deal of electricity in the air,' replied Nelson.

Another pause, and Jessie stooped to stroke and quiet Sandy, who, not liking the unusual silence, was beginning to fidget with the skirt of her dress again.

'You return to India next week?' suggested Jessie, with a trembling voice.

'I *sail* next week,' said Nelson, with a slight emphasis on the word 'sail.' He had rather a habit of quietly correcting errors

in speaking, and his doing so now gave Jessie courage. She smiled.

'I do not know what your father will do when you are gone,' she said.

'Very well, doubtless,' replied Nelson gravely, and an additional shade fell on his face.

Another pause. Was this Nelson? Jessie asked herself. Assuredly not the Nelson she had known, therefore she could have nothing to do with him; still she must not give him up, for his father's sake.

'Nelson!' she ejaculated softly, glancing into his face.

'Well, Jessie?' he replied, avoiding a second encounter of the *truthful* eye. Like Homer, we must keep to our distinguishing epithet.

'You will not go away from us with unkind and unfriendly feelings towards us?' said Jessie, forcing out the sentence as if each word was a leaden ball, but being much relieved when they were all discharged.

Nelson was silent.

'You have been much aggrieved, Nelson; but it should not quite break up the friendship of a life, or—or—stifle the love of a son.'

Jessie felt that she had fairly started, and trembled all over. She waited to see whether her words would produce any effect, but there was none visibly.

'Nelson, you will not go away in anger?'

'Not with you,—you could never cause anger.'

'But with others?'

'They are different.'

'For so many years,—perhaps for ever? Think, Nelson. A time will surely come when you would give all you possess in the world never to have said such words. It must be bad to part from those who are nothing to us, in anger,—but from those who love us'—

'Love us!' echoed Nelson, with an emphasis so bitter that it made Jessie start; 'who loves us? Those who rejoice when we are most wretched, or those who make us wretched?'

'Both—all. You cannot know how well, because you will not.'

'I judge by actions. I have been deceived, laughed at, and insulted by those who professed to love me; and I believe in the word no more.'

'Will you permit me to say what I have at heart, and forgive me if I wound you? and will you believe that all I say is with a good motive, and for your happiness and that of others?'

'Jessie, you alone of all the world may say what you like to me, and feel assured that your motives will never be misunderstood by me; but if you think to reconcile me to life, my friends, or myself, you deceive yourself.'

'God forbid, Nelson! But to this love in which you do not believe circumstances have blinded your eyes. I must begin at the beginning, and show you how you have deceived yourself. I must wound you, or rather probe the wound, I hope the better to heal it. Anna loved you, still loves you—as—as her own brother.'

'Take care, Jessie! remember, you wake a fiend.'

'I know—I feel, but we cannot command our affections in another sense.'

Poor Jessie! as she proceeded, her own cheeks grew crimson, and her voice faltered painfully.

'Anna was young and heedless,—she thought it well to marry; and she loved you,—yes, but not as she should have loved you to become your wife. She found this out when too late, and in the impetuosity of her feelings wrote you that letter. I do not exculpate her,—she was wrong, very wrong; but she knew that she was wrong, and confessed, and suffered for it.'

'Suffered! Anna suffer! She never thought of any one but herself, and her own momentary gratification. Coquette! jilt!'

'Yet she has suffered, and for your sake!'

'I want no one to suffer for me. Let her be as happy as she may with him she has chosen; but I should feel insulted by her thinking of me.'

'Yet she begged me to entreat your forgiveness; to assure you how conscious she is of her ill-conduct, and to say she feels that she is not worthy of you.'

'I wonder you use that hackneyed phrase on such an occasion. Who thinks of the relative worth of the parties in such a case? But she is right, Jessie. A heartless jilt is worthy of no man of honour and principle.'

'Oh, Nelson! think of the thoughtless child you used to play with,—the pride you used to be amused with at nine years old, when you little thought of these evil days,—the merry hours we had with her, when she made her early conquests,—and do not be too hard upon her at nineteen, whom you helped to spoil at nine.'

'It is my own folly that I despise the most. To love such a heedless, vain, deceitful girl; to have been taken by beauty and the fascination of manner, and all the outward charms that my judgment has always taught me to consider secondary; above all, to have loved her so blindly, when I felt that she did

not care for me as I did for her,—I, who had watched her greater love for another. Oh, fool! madman!'

'But every one must love her, Nelson,—she was born for it; and do we not instinctively love all that is beautiful?—the brightest, fairest flowers, the most glorious sunsets, the most brilliant moonlights?'

'No, I think not. I love the violet for its perfume; I have always loved best the most quiet and unpretending things, until now.'

Here a quick new pang shot through Nelson's heart. He remembered that he had once loved Jessie,—that boyish, but true, holy feeling that had been so much the best. He glanced at her as she stood, agitated and pale, before him, and thought of what had been. Jessie felt the look, and, with a quick perception of the truth, changed the immediate subject of conversation.

'Your father is unhappy about you, Nelson,' she said, more abruptly than she intended.

'Has he been complaining?' asked Nelson, with the brow again knitting that had been less overcast during the last few minutes.

'You know he always tells me everything,' said Jessie simply.

'Then you know that he rejoices at my pain, and is angry at my feeling aggrieved. He is unnatural, and I cannot believe he cares for me.'

'You must make allowances for his temper and frame of mind,—you always did before.'

'He was never heartless and cruel before.'

'He did not think Anna suited to you; and he felt a momentary pleasure at your being free from her. But he heartily repents having let you perceive it; indeed, indeed he does.'

'He is morose and sullen with me,—scarcely speaks to me,—and yet you say he repents!'

'Do you repent, Nelson? It is not for the father to make excuses to the son.'

'Repent of what?—of loving too blindly and too well? Yes, from the bottom of my heart, though the love is still there, and will never be rooted out.'

Jessie smothered a sigh as she said,—

'But your words! was there nothing to repent of in them?—your own father?'

'What words? We have scarcely spoken since.'

'The one involuntary exclamation which seems to have had such an effect upon him.'

'I remember none,—I made none. What do you mean?'

'Just as your father had read the letter, and thoughtlessly shouted, 'Hurrah, boys!' which you know is only a way he has'—

'I assure you, Jessie, that I remember nothing after that moment, except that I went to my room and suffered more intolerable agonies than I ever endured before. What does my father say?'

'That you refused his offered hand.'

'Of course I did; was I to congratulate myself on being made wretched? What more?'

'And that you said, "Are you a brute, father?" looked at him as if you thought him worse than a brute, left him, and have scarcely spoken to him since.'

'Could I have said such a thing? I assure you, Jessie, it must have escaped in the agony of the moment, as I am quite unconscious of having spoken at all; though I remember feeling much hurt, and thinking my father worse than cruel.'

'I thought so,' said Jessie, relieved of a weight of uncertainty, 'but your father,—he heard you say the words, and does not know but that you meant them.'

'And so I undoubtedly did, little thinking that I had given utterance to my feelings; and I still say that he was unkind and unnatural.'

'But he did not intend to be so, Nelson,—he says he did not; and you must not leave him under the impression that he did, nor must you leave him with the notion in his mind that he has an unnatural son,—it would make him wretched for life.'

'I have no desire to do so; but I am in no mood to conciliate, or enter upon long explanations.'

'May I not say something for you? I have done so before successfully; for your father always listens to reason.'

'To *your* reason, Jessie; who would not? because you have always justice and charity on your side. You may say what you like; I know you will neither say too much nor too little.'

'It is only needful to speak the truth in this as in all other instances; truth is always best in the end.'

'It is a pity that everybody does not speak it as boldly, yet as gently, as you do!' said Nelson, the deep shadow again falling on his face. 'How could two sisters be so different?'

'Anna would not tell a lie,' said Jessie quickly.

'But she will act one. However, Jessie, you have taken some trouble, and I know put yourself into an unpleasant strait, to do me a service, simply because you thought it right. I will say one thing to you,—I am more to blame than Anna in this matter.

I knew that she did not love me; I knew that a reserved, steady, unattractive fellow, such as I am, was unfit for a sparkling, accomplished, lovely creature like Anna,—just as much so as her giddiness, coquetry, and love of admiration were unsuited to me; yet I was selfish fool enough to take advantage of her evidently temporary rupture with another and more attractive lover to press my suit. I saw she accepted me because she wanted to be free from teaching; I knew that you perceived that she did not care a straw for me. I was aware of it all, but I resolutely blinded my eyes, and closed up my ears, to prevent myself from seeing and hearing more, and to try to shut out what I had already seen and heard. I did so,—how, Heaven knows. I was happy—madly happy; and now the blind is taken from the eyes, and the wool from the ears, and I am wretched in proportion. Her image haunts me day and night, and will till I die. I pray that I may get into battle as soon as I am in India, to put an end to the torture.'

'Oh, Nelson! is this you?' said Jessie, greatly shocked.

'You would not have believed it, would you? Nor should I; but so it is. I suppose we who have not strong passions generally are the most torn by them when they do take possession of us. My whole mind has had a revolution, and will never recover its equilibrium.'

'Do not say so; we are taught where to find a cure in all diseases of the mind, even more surely than in bodily ones. Do not forget Him who will in no wise cast out those who come to Him. Disappointments are sent us for our good, to strengthen, not to weaken, the heart and understanding.'

'Jessie, reason and the Bible make me agree with you, but my own will turns me aside. I am not, I fear, so religious as I was when I went into the army; my faith has been shaken, I scarcely know how; and the Bible that my father gave me has not been studied as it ought to have been.'

'I have read in biographies of great and good men, Nelson, that the most pious and learned have all passed through the same doubts and difficulties that have made of some men infidels. The difference has been, I think, that the former have desired to find the truth, and have prayed humbly for enlightenment; whilst the latter have wished to find the Bible a lie, and have read it without hope or prayer, until they have believed what they wished. When we forget to pray, and to put our trust wholly in the Divine arm for guidance, it is all over with us.'

'I believe you are right, Jessie. The temptations of the world draw us away from better things, and infidelity creeps into

the heart ; not that I am an unbeliever,—God forbid !—only my faith has lost its vitality.'

'Pray !' said Jessie, tears starting into her eyes in spite of her efforts to restrain them. 'God's Holy Spirit alone can wash out the stains that we contract as we go through life.'

'If I could wash the last six or eight months out of my life, there might be hope, but I have none now,' said Nelson, with such a gravity and decision of manner as made Jessie shudder. 'But one thing I will do, or rather you will do for me, reconcile me to my father.'

'He is at Fairfield now,' said Jessie.

'I think I would rather, if you would undertake it, Jessie, that you should first explain matters to him. If we enter upon the subject, he will at once get warm, and we shall quarrel ; whereas, if we meet and shake hands as usual, and say nothing, all will blow over. Will you allow me to walk with you ?'

Jessie looked her permission ; and it was such a pleased, glad expression that lit up her face, that it made Nelson sigh.

It was six or seven years ago when they last walked alone from the town to Fairfield. Then, almost boy and girl, they had been arm in arm, gravely talking of Nelson's future plans, and of many things beyond their years : now, man and woman, they walked side by side, but scarcely spoke ; Nelson did not even offer his arm, and the old reserve seemed to have come upon him with the fresh air. Jessie longed to renew the subject that they had been talking of so lately, but her courage failed, when she perceived the gloom on Nelson's face. Once more the state of the atmosphere became the grand and engrossing topic ; and you would have thought that those two human beings, whose hearts were stirring with thoughts so deep and painful that they could scarcely endure them alone, had no one idea in common, beyond the heat and the cold, the sunshine and shadow,—except, perhaps, the little terrier, whose merits they discussed by fits and starts. Oh, what an untold multitude of hypocrites there are in this world !

As they got into the orchard, and drew near the pigeon-house, some of the pigeons, perceiving Jessie, flew towards her, and, as usual, perched upon her shoulders, and hovered about her head. The old sight recalled old times, and Nelson smiled, and said it was refreshing to come to Fairfield, and see everything so happy, and so much at home. The old smile encouraged Jessie, and she suddenly felt the weight rise from her heart that had been pressing it down during their walk.

'I will go on first,' she said, 'and if you will come in five minutes, I am sure all will be right.'

She did so, and at the bottom of the orchard met Captain Burford and Uncle James, who were coming to look after her. She soon gave the latter a commission to go and see an invalid cow, and then lost no time in telling the Captain simply, and in her own straightforward manner, what Nelson had said.

'Hang me, if I didn't think so!' shouted the Captain. 'Where is the boy? Good-bye, Jessie; God bless you, little peace-maker!—I must go and make up with him directly. He doesn't know that he called me a brute, and didn't mean it if he did. All's right, then. I was sure of it in my own heart; but that cursed pride of mine, and of his through me, did the business. Good-bye, my dear. Hurrah, boys! there he is, by Jove! Nelson, my dear boy! did you come on purpose?—to be sure you did. There; let us shake hands and be father and son once more. I am sorry I was so thoughtless when you were unhappy. I know you didn't mean what you said: it was all my fault, and I was a proud, selfish old fool, thinking of nothing but my own wishes, and of—of—Jessie a little, perhaps. But it is all over now. God bless you, Nel! I hope we shall all live to be happy yet. I am very sorry that I hurt your feelings,—confound the feelings! If we had no feelings, what steady-sailing crafts we should be!'

'My dear father,' said Nelson, as soon as he had time to put in a word, 'it is I who ought to be ashamed of myself, for allowing my feelings to get the better of my duty and love to you. I beg your pardon with all my heart, and hope nothing may ever again cause a coldness between us.'

As Nelson pressed his father's hand and bent over it, tears came into the eyes of the old man, to conceal which he gave his son a slap on the shoulder, and concluded with his favourite saying, ''Twill be all the same a hundred years hence.'

'Where's Jessie? where's the little peacemaker?' he asked, after a short pause. 'Flown, I declare! Come, Nel, let us follow her, and have one more happy rubber at dear old Fairfield before you go to that confounded India. There never was anybody like Jessie, and never will be,—that's a certain fact. She is as perfect as any one can be in an imperfect world.'

The father and son walked arm in arm into the house, and they had one more happy evening at Fairfield. Uncle James was there, and Pynsent; and Captain Burford so managed matters as that he and Pynsent should be partners, and Uncle James and Aunt Betsey their opponents. Now he was by no means a good manœuvrer, and Nelson and Jessie, as well as the rest of the party, saw through his *ruse* at once. Nelson was distressed for a moment; but Jessie, with that tact which in some would

be hypocrisy, but was in her delicacy, soon put him at his ease. Seated as usual at her little work-table, she conversed with cheerfulness and good sense. Nelson sat near her, and, for the first time since he left England, they had a *tête-à-tête* evening. He was led gradually to forget his griefs, and to talk with tolerable energy on such topics as Jessie began. She had read a great deal, and when she actually gave herself up to entertain another, could do so as well, or better, than many more learned and accomplished women. Her natural dignity gave one charm more to her simplicity of character; and Nelson found himself wondering where she could have gathered so much information, and the power of expressing it so well. Neither by word nor action did she allow him to suppose that he was more to her than the friend of her childhood; and as he was not a vain or conceited man, he was happy in believing that she at least was no sufferer by his late conduct. He knew well that his father had always been talking to her of him, and openly expressing his wishes concerning both, therefore he had feared that she might have given weight to such words. So Jessie was a hypocrite after all! How many such there are!

The evening came to a close, as such evenings always do, and one or two more similar ones had also a like end. Nelson and Jessie had fallen into a rather deep religious argument, in which not only her speech but her heartfelt prayers were involved, and Nelson was the better for both. Although quite as grave and cheerless as ever, and his thoughts quite as much wrapped up in his disappointment, he gave ear to Jessie, and was glad to be near her, and to talk to her. The last evening he again poured out some of his bitter feelings against Anna, and again hoped that he should soon be so engaged as to have an end put to a life that had lost all its charm. He chanced to look at Jessie as he spoke, and never afterwards forgot the expression of intense pain that settled on her countenance. He felt ashamed of himself for having been weak and unmanly enough to pour forth words that could have caused such an expression, and would have gladly recalled whatever could give a shadow of distress to one so good and gentle. Had he ventured again to look into her eyes when they parted that night, he might have been still more forcibly struck. The hard struggle to restrain the burst of grief that was waiting to accompany the tears that fell from her eyes, worked unmistakeably in her face, and moved her features with a strange agitation. But Nelson dared not look at her. He knew that he had been false at heart to one true as the loadstone, and that, whatever their respective positions, he had scarcely been consistent even in his friendship. He could only

press her hand firmly between both of his, and say, 'God bless you, Jessie! Take care of my father.' Had he seen her five minutes afterwards, giving way to her last weakness in an agony of tears and prayers in her own room, alone and on her knees, he might perhaps have known what a treasure he had cast away from him, and have been grateful at least for so pure a love.

And thus Nelson departed for the second time for India, taking with him all his bitter feelings and heavy disappointments, and leaving behind him hearts that beat kindly and fondly for him, without selfishness or mistrust.

CHAPTER XXIX.

'How beautiful she looked, as o'er her child
The youthful matron bent with tender care!
While the unconscious cherub's features smiled,
Reflecting back his mother's graces there:
How beautiful she looked! how more than earthly fair!

'How more than beautiful doth beauty seem!
What holier garb can woman's graces wear!
Not Eve, when bending o'er her mirror stream,
In native innocence, could look more fair
Than the young matron looks, tending her infant care.'

NEARLY two years passed over quiet Fairfield, unmarked by any very wonderful event. All novelties came to it in letters, and the postman occasionally brought Jessie such as roused or depressed her usually calm spirits, according to the nature of their contents. She heard at various times the histories of all dear to her, of whose happiness and well-doing she thought much more than of her own. Charles had gone to Italy to study, assisted thereto by his uncles, and bearing with him letters of introduction to men of talent, which were given him by patients and friends of Mr. Timothy Barnard. Charles's communications from Italy were of high interest, and read, as may be supposed, with considerable pleasure by the little party at home. His soul was in his art, and he was truly labouring on to perfection, and finding encouragement and happiness. He once met Mr. Michelson in a gallery at Rome, where he was studying, and once in the studio of a friend. Mr. Michelson had glanced over his shoulder in the gallery at his painting, evidently without recognising him, and had requested to be introduced to the promising young artist in the studio, but, upon hearing his name, had without further remark bowed slightly,

frowned considerably, and shortly after left the room. But Charles hoped to do well without patronage, and was not sorry to be free from all obligation to Mr. Michelson

Then there arrived at Fairfield a rather brief letter from Louisa Colville, giving the intelligence of her intended marriage with a Colonel Marsden, a friend of her father's, whom she described as brave and kind, and likely, her parents told her, to make an excellent husband.

Pynsent's cynical remark on this news was,—

'Did I not tell you that all pretty young ladies marry for the sake of marrying, or for rank, or money? Miss Colville was a pretty young lady, with soft blue eyes, and of course she is doing the same. School-misses and all misses are alike.'

'And why should not Louisa marry?' asked Jessie, feeling herself rather annoyed at her marrying a man who was, from her own account, old enough to be her father.

'I am sure I can have no objection. Anna is married; and I daresay, as Miss Colville is the eldest, it is high time for her to marry. She would have been quite *passée* in a year or two. Is that the approved word, Jessie? I am getting up my French.'

Jessie fancied she perceived a vein of bitterness under Pynsent's raillery. If he had ever liked any one girl better than another, she was sure it was Louisa Colville, and, in spite of his determined mockery of all ladies below the sensible age of forty, she knew that he admired her.

But in due course of time her marriage was announced, and if Pynsent had ever thought seriously of her, he was obliged to forget her now, and stick more closely than ever to drugs and pill-boxes.

The letters from Nelson to his father were few, but affectionate. Brief and hurried, they usually spoke of active and imperative military duties, frequent engagements with the natives, as precursors of a decided war, and hopes that actual fighting was at hand. He always desired every kind remembrance to Jessie, little thinking of the anguish his letters and their breathings after warfare caused her. We must not forget to say that he was then gazetted captain.

Anna's communications were the most satisfactory and amusing,—for a long time, at least. Descriptions of military men, military balls, military admiration, and military fascination, ran through them. She was evidently the idol of Chatham and of all his friends. More spoiled than ever, Jessie trembled for her. She entered with all her heart into the pleasures of the life into which she was cast, and Chatham seemed to rejoice in her

success in society, as fervently as a mother when she introduces her eldest daughter. His scraps of notes were eloquent of the praises of his wife, and of the sensation she excited wherever she went. He declared he was growing jealous; but Jessie perceived with thankfulness that he was not jealous. She saw, however, with anxiety, that although their income was now very good, they must be already living beyond it. The presents they made lavishly to each other; those frequently sent to Jessie, against her earnest desire; Anna's dress; Chatham's stud; the constant balls and parties,—all combined to rouse her fears, and to make her caution them both. They always took her cautions with the most perfect good-humour, but laughed at them, calling her their good, sensible, prudent little housekeeper.

It was with the greatest delight that Jessie heard of the birth of a son. If anything could make both parents thoughtful and steady, it would be this event. For a long time their letters were filled with accounts of this child, who seemed to engross every thought and desire of their hearts. By degrees, pleasure and diversion divided their attention with him, and it was again evident to Jessie that they were amusing themselves at the expense of prudence.

When they had been married about two years, came the astounding intelligence that Chatham's regiment was ordered at once to India, and was to sail almost immediately. Anna's letter was so hasty and incoherent, and so full of the war in India, that little was to be gathered from it of their immediate plans, and Jessie was for some time in great anxiety about them, as they did not write very regularly.

One afternoon, as she was sitting alone with Pynsent, talking of them, and undergoing a lecture from him for what he called her needless fears, a message was brought to her that she was wanted at the gate. To her surprise she saw a chaise and pair, and, pausing with a nervous dread of strangers, meditated a retreat. The door opened, however, and a lady descended, so she had no escape.

'Don't be frightened, Jessie, there is nothing the matter,' in well-known, well-loved tones, and in another moment she was clasped in Anna's arms.

Before she had time to speak, Anna ran back to the carriage, and received something from within. This 'something' she brought to Jessie, and held up with a tearful look of love and pride. It was her baby. Jessie took the child, and, as may be supposed, was soon smothering it with kisses. The nurse followed, and there was great commotion in the little court, inasmuch as the baby began to cry, and all were at once

engaged in pacifying it. Pynsent might have been seen peeping through the window-blind, and wondering what it was all about. Anna did apparently catch sight of him, for, forgetful of old scores, she exclaimed, 'Ah, Pynsent!' and ran into the hall where he was.

'I know you have forgiven me,' she said, extending both hands and a beautiful, beseeching face to her brother.

He was not hard-hearted enough to resist it, but, with an exclamation of surprise, 'Anna, can it be you?' clasped the offered hands and kissed warmly the flushed cheeks. Instantly Anna was in the passage again, and, snatching her baby from Jessie's arms, presented him to Pynsent.

'He is to be your godson, Pynsent. His name is Chatham Pynsent Michelson, and you are to be very fond of him.'

As Pynsent took the baby rather awkwardly, Anna laughed and cried together.

'There is aunty! and Uncle James!—together! alone! They must marry after all!' she exclaimed, as two passers-by darkened the window.

She was in the court again, her arms round both alternately; and then she dragged them into the hall to her baby. She insisted on Uncle James's holding and Aunt Betsey's kissing him, a ceremony they performed even more awkwardly than Pynsent had done.

'Come in, Dinah! and Will!' she cried, as she saw the two servants peeping in at the door. 'Come and see my baby;' and, shaking hands with both, she again took the redoubtable Chatham Pynsent in her arms, and presented him in form, The smart nurse looked rather alarmed as she saw her be-laced and be-cambricked charge dandled by old Will, whose large brown earth-covered hands were evidently better used to nursing than those of any one else present,—a fact proved by the instantaneous crowing and laughing of the infant.

It was pleasant to see the graceful, elegantly-dressed Anna, surrounded by that homely family group in the old-fashioned hall, showing off her beautiful baby. The young mother forgot everything else in her pride and happiness. She could answer no questions, make no inquiries, until every one had received and welcomed her baby. Then, taking him again in her own arms, and bursting into tears, she looked at Jessie, and said, as well as her sobs would let her,—

'I have brought him to you, Jessie. I am going to India with my husband, and the doctors say the climate would kill the baby. You must take him, or he must go with us and die. I could not give him to any one else, and I must go with Chatham.'

She looked hesitatingly round upon the assembled friends and relations, who were taken somewhat aback by this unexpected intelligence. All but Jessie and old Will hated babies, and they instantaneously felt what an encumbrance one would be at Fairfield. However, Jessie put her arms round Anna and her child, and said,—

'We will settle this by and by. Baby and you are both too tired to discuss anything now, so come and take off your bonnet, and make yourself comfortable.'

'My dear Anna,' began Aunt Betsey, when they were all seated together after a late tea, 'are you sure that you can bear the climate of India yourself? or is it right for a young woman to be going out at such a time?'

'I am quite decided upon that head, aunty. Nothing should keep me in England whilst Chatham is in India. He has wasted a waggon-load of arguments upon me already, and we have quite quarrelled about it, but he has failed of convincing me. I am resolved to go with him, even if I must take baby with me.'

'Headstrong as ever, Anna!' said Pynsent, looking with some degree of wonder at his beautiful sister,—so self-possessed,—so much a woman of the world already,—so conscious of her own power,—she seemed to know that no one could deny her anything.

'Perhaps more so,' she replied, 'because I have not my cross brother to put me out of conceit with myself and to thwart me. Chatham is so kind, he spoils me. Oh, you should know how amiable he is! But what am I to do with my baby? I have only a few days to stay, and we must settle about him. Chatham objected to my bringing him here, because, he said, he knew you would none of you like it, and it would be an imposition. Then he wanted to write first, but I could not be happy until I had settled the matter, so I came straight without any delay.'

'It would be impossible for me to remain in a house where there was a baby,' said Aunt Betsey; 'it would quite disarrange all my habits and plans, and destroy every domestic comfort.'

'Such a baby!' exclaimed Anna indignantly. 'Your own grand-nephew! How cruel! I thought you would have welcomed a child of mine with delight.'

Aunt Betsey did not quite like the idea of a 'grand-nephew,' as Anna called it; it sounded in her ears like a grandson.

'My dear!' said she statelily, 'when one has not for years been accustomed to infants, it is impossible to reconcile oneself to the discomfort of them. I repeat that I could not remain in the same house with one.'

Pynsent inwardly applauded her taste, but wondered which would be the worst evil, Aunt Betsey or the baby.

'But, aunty,' said Jessie, 'I would take care that you were not annoyed by the poor child. He seems a very good, quiet baby, and such a darling!'

'I never saw a good, quiet baby yet, Jessie,' said Aunt Betsey; 'and I am sure, to judge from the noise I have already heard, Anna's is not an exception. Why, my head aches from it, and I have been obliged to put cotton-wool in my ears, which is by no means agreeable.'

'If you had asked me, I could have suggested something more effectual,' said Pynsent.

'I suppose, then, I must take my baby with me, and let him run the chance of dying,' said Anna, her face growing very red. 'I thought you would all have taken him to your hearts for my sake, instead of rejecting him in this way.'

'My dear, people should consider before they try to palm off their babies on others. I suppose there must be such things, but they are disagreeable necessities, and parents should keep them out of sight. Children begin to be endurable at five or six years old, not before.'

'But you were fond of us, aunty,' said Jessie, 'and always spoiled us. You doted on Anna as a baby.'

'The case is different. You had no parents, and I was under the necessity of seeing to you. But pray do not argue the matter. Of course you can keep the child, and I can procure another abode elsewhere.'

Here Anna began to shed tears.

'There is but one course to take, that I can see,' said Uncle James bluffly: 'one or other of the parties had better come to the Grange. There are rooms enough for a dozen nursemaids and their babbies; but if that won't do, they are all at the service of Miss Burton.'

'Rooms or nursemaids?' asked Pynsent.

'Rooms, sir,' replied Uncle James, blushing like a very full-blown rose, and looking very good-natured and handsome as he did so.

Aunt Betsey blushed also, and murmured the word 'Propriety.' Jessie looked at the pair with amazement; so did Anna through her tears. Pynsent bit his lip half through to keep from laughing.

'We could easy make it proper enough' (Uncle James was never quite clear about the distinction of adjectives and adverbs). 'If Miss Betsey will take compassion upon the old Grange, there need be no difficulty about Anna's poor little babby.'

Could it be, the nieces and nephew asked themselves, that

Uncle James still had serious thoughts of Aunt Betsey? So unsuitable, so uncongenial, so seemingly incongruous a match! He had never loved anybody else,—that they knew; but that at the respective ages of sixty and fifty he should still preserve that love fresh enough to wish to marry her, appeared impossible. Yet so it was. Uncle James could find no fault in the woman he had been attached to all his life. He still looked upon her as the pattern of propriety, the pink of sense, and the rose of beauty. What Miss Betsey Burton had been more than thirty years ago, she was still to him; and to see her in state, knitting in the large parlour of the Grange instead of in the small parlour at Fairfield, to have servants to wait upon her, and still to preserve her in her original condition of a lady of family,—would have made him a happy man for life. That this had been always in his thoughts, nobody knew but himself; and that since the one rebuff he had never had courage to say it, nobody knew either. But this sudden climax in the family politics seemed to afford an opportunity for opening a window of his long-shut heart, and he did it boldly. He never could have ventured to do it alone with her, but there was safety and escape in numbers.

And Aunt Betsey! alas for human pride and human weakness! She had given up all hopes of Mr. Michelson, but she had still the old wish to be married. She had never taken kindly to old-maidism. She had withered upon it: some people do, with wiser heads than Aunt Betsey's, more's the pity. She who had been such a toast, such a beauty, to die single after all! it was beyond the strength of woman to endure cheerfully; and she never had endured it cheerfully. Of late she had been civil to Uncle James, and had thought him a very fine man. She had considered also that the Grange was a nice old place, and might be made a country-seat of, and he a country gentleman, with a little management. It was not such a place as the Hall, certainly; but it was not so bad. And then it might be better to be mistress there than maiden aunt at Fairfield.

Such thoughts had of late been flitting through the mind of Uncle James and Aunt Betsey, and the present division of family interests tended to make them serious. Uncle James, having once broached the subject, was resolved to go through with it. He saw nothing ridiculous in the affair, and was not, indeed, very susceptible of ridicule himself. He knew how to give a joke and take one, and he did not care a whit whether his nephews or nieces laughed at him or not. So he continued the conversation, to the infinite delight of Pynsent, who inwardly wished him joy of Aunt Betsey, if he got her.

'You see, ma'am,' he said, addressing Aunt Betsey with all the

features of his face except his eyes, 'the poor babby must be cared for, and you don't take to it. I can't say that I like the noise of a babby myself; and if it comes to the Grange, I shall make the nursery as far off as I can. But I see no call for his coming to the Grange, if you will only do me the honour of coming yourself. It isn't a bad old place, and with your taste you might improve it and its master. What do you say, Nevy Pynsent?'

'I quite agree with you, uncle,' said Pynsent, coughing violently (Anna said afterwards she thought he would have broken a blood-vessel): 'Aunt Betsey would do much more good at the Grange than Anna's baby.'

'Pynsent, how foolish you are!' murmured Aunt Betsey over her knitting, which she was pertinaciously pursuing.

'Well, ma'am, it remains for you to decide,' said Uncle James, with great modesty. 'I know I am not deserving, but under the circumstances'—

'I must go and see a patient,' broke in Pynsent. 'Jessie, will you come and give me that—that small bottle of wine you promised? Anna, your baby is crying like a young bull.'

Pynsent rose and beckoned his sisters, who rose also.

'Nevy, nevy!' muttered Uncle James imploringly, pulling Pynsent's coat-tails. 'Stay, Nevy Pynsent: no secrets amongst us, you know.'

But Nevy Pynsent knew full well that whatever Uncle James might think, Aunt Betsey would not like a public proposal, but would require all the formalities and etiquette of courtship.

'I wish you success, uncle!' said Pynsent, tapping him on the shoulder, and then, giving a tug to Anna's dress and Jessie's ringlets, he drew them out of the room.

After they were gone there was a most awkward pause. Aunt Betsey knitted nervously, and felt several twitchings at her fingers' ends, but sat as stately as a queen, the black turban looking more imposing and grand than usual, as it surmounted the black hair.

'Miss Burton,' at last suggested Uncle James.

'Sir!' replied Aunt Betsey.

Another pause.

'You understand my mind?' pursued Uncle James.

'Not precisely.'

'Why, I have felt and meant the same all my life. You must know what I wish, ma'am?'

'Public communications take one by surprise, Mr. Barnard.'

'Dang my buttons, private or public is all the same to me. I don't care who knows it!'

'Knows what?' gently inquired Aunt Betsey.

'Knows all, ma'am,—what you and I *knows*.'

'I cannot say I quite understand you,' said Aunt Betsey.

'Why, that I am ready and willing to marry you whenever you like, if you will consent,' blurted out Uncle James, with an effort so strong that he was compelled to take out his silk handkerchief and wipe his forehead.

There was no mistake now, so Aunt Betsey put down her knitting. She had still too much of the old leaven in her to make her devoted swain happy at once. 'You do me much honour, I am sure, Mr. Barnard; but you take one by surprise. I cannot say I quite expected this.'

'But you know it now, ma'am, and must excuse my boldness. I would have said my say better if I could, but somehow it slipped from me unawares, and there's no recalling it now. 'Twas the babby that did it, and I hope I have not offended you.'

'By no means, sir; but the honour you intend me requires consideration. So serious a subject cannot be decided at once. I had not imagined that you still retained your old feelings.'

'Never altered, ma'am, upon my soul; I have grown grey upon 'em. I know I've been a fool,—ask your pardon, Miss Burton,—but you never used to care a rap for me, still I have never changed towards you.'

Aunt Betsey was touched. She played with her eyeglass, and the old, old thought of Mr. Michelson came to her mind. She compared the conduct of the fine gentleman and the bluff farmer involuntarily, and silently acknowledged the superiority of the latter. In spite of all the ridicule that might be attached to it by the world, there was something sublime in a love that had lived through more than thirty years, without hope or encouragement, and that was willing at sixty to perform what it pined for at five-and-twenty. Aunt Betsey was old-maidish, vain, prim, proud, selfish, spoiled by early adulation, and imperious; but in the midst of this collection of faults and follies, there lay a heart, or the shrivelled remains of one, susceptible of some degree of warm feeling, which, if tended and nurtured, might still send forth its little flames. She was not worthy of Uncle James. But he thought her as superior to him as woman could be to man; and, after all, it is not what the world thinks, or even what actually exists, that makes the happiness of an individual, but what he thinks or feels himself. Uncle James was content that, as his wife, Miss Betsey Burton should go on at the Grange just as he had seen her go on at Fairfield; if she improved, so much the better for him, but he needed no improvement.

So Aunt Betsey played with her eyeglass, and slightly blushed,

and, without in the least descending from the dignity of her original deportment, she rose, and, making a kind of obeisance, extended three fingers of her still very white hand to Uncle James, which that excellent man seized between both of his very brown ones, and devoutly kissed. As a gentleman of the old school, he performed the other part of the ceremony of proposal fashionable in his day. He fell down on one knee, with which act of adoration Miss Betsey was particularly pleased, she having conceived her notions on such matters from Richardson's heroes and heroines, who always enacted similar scenes with due propriety.

There was a falling off when it came to the 'getting up' part of the act. When Aunt Betsey murmured, 'Pray rise, Mr. Barnard,' and would have assisted her knight so to do, she found that, physically as well as morally, 'it is easier to fall than to rise again.' She did not, like the fair dame who brought the *great* historian Gibbon to his knees, ring the bell for the servant to help him up, but she delicately pushed a chair towards him, which, however, he gallantly disdained. Resting his hand on his bended knee, he slowly drew up the extended foot, and with one mighty effort, and a long-drawn breath, he at last managed to get clear of the matting.

'Haw! haw! haw!' he exploded, when he was fairly on his feet. 'I beg your pardon, ma'am, but after all there's no fool so great as an old fool. First time and last, James, my boy, isn't it?'

Aunt Betsey frowned, and Uncle James looked alarmed.

'May I hope, Miss Burton, that my offer is or will be accepted?' he said, with becoming gravity.

'Sir, I must somewhat more maturely consider the subject before I give my final answer. This much I may venture to say, my feelings have undergone a change towards you, and that of a favourable nature.'

Uncle James, in ecstasies, seized the yielding hand, and would have been on his knees again, but for a sudden twinge in his foot, which forewarned him of gout.

'May I call in Nevy Pynsent and our nieces?' he asked.

'My mind is too much fluttered to admit of that at present,' said Aunt Betsey. 'If you will excuse me, I will retire for a time, and collect my scattered ideas.'

'Certainly, my dear—hem! certainly, ma'am,' said Uncle James, pausing on the former epithet, lest it should be premature, and palliating it with the second.

Aunt Betsey deigned a smile, however, and, once more offering her hand, swept out of the room.

'Nevy! Nevy Pynsent! Jessie! Anna!' called Uncle James in the passage, and the three apostrophized individuals appeared from the parlour, Jessie carrying the baby asleep in her arms.

'You may keep the babby here; make yourself easy, Anna. You're going to lose Aunt Betsey, nevy.'

'Thank goodness!' said Pynsent. 'I mean, my dear uncle, on your account: you will be the gainer, we the losers. I congratulate you.'

'I am the proudest man in the world this day, my dear children. What I have been living for these thirty years,—what has often saved me from drink and other misbecoming things, in the prospect,—has now become certain. I shall be happy at last.'

'God grant it, my best uncle,' said Jessie, kissing the beaming face of the happy man, and feeling no doubt that he would be all the happier, and perhaps all the better, for marrying his first and only love, even though she was as little suited to him as could be.

'Uncle, do you know what Dr. Johnson says?' asked Pynsent.

'No; what, you scamp?'

'That if marriages were made by the Lord Chancellor instead of in heaven, as is supposed, there would be quite as many happy matches. Where do you think yours was made?'

'Begun at Fairfield, and ended, I hope, at the parish church, my boy. The sooner you follow my example the better; it is no good wasting one's best years, if one can help it,—is it, Anna?'

'No, indeed, uncle; I am for marrying as soon as possible; and I think it is never too late to do a good thing.'

'You minx! You mean to insinuate that it is late for me?'

'Oh, never *too* late, I said, uncle. I wish I could be at the wedding. Chatham is coming to fetch me, and we are to christen baby, and then—and then!—oh, Jessie! give him to me, the dear darling! How can I part with him?—how can I leave him, even to you?'

'A christening and a wedding!' exclaimed Pynsent. 'I shall fly the country! And then a baby, "mewling and puking!" I will give it a dose, Anna, and settle its accounts. Verdict: "Died by the visitation of God," "Unknown cause," "Arsenic administered in pap." Now call the bride-elect, and let us have some supper. Uncle, you can't eat, I suppose?'

'Never felt so hungry in my life!' said Uncle James.

'Three cheers for the young couple,—hip, hip, hip, hurrah!' shouted Pynsent, and with lungs innocent of consumption he went to call Aunt Betsey.

CHAPTER XXX.

'Where is it mothers learn their love?—
In every church a fountain springs,
O'er which th' eternal Dove
Hovers on softest wings.

'What sparkles in that lucid flood
Is water by gross mortals eyed;
But, seen by faith, 'tis blood
Out of a dear Friend's side.'—KEBLE.

IT was the good and salutary custom in the parish church to which Fairfield belonged, to baptize children on the Sunday during divine service. The Burtons had always been strict Church people, and Jessie inherited, even more than the rest of the family, that spirit which, without tending to superstitious observance of rites and ceremonies, made her tenacious of giving due honour to all she had learned to love and reverence. It was therefore her particular request that her little nephew should be publicly brought into Christ's Church on the day set apart for His service, and in the presence of His family. She argued that the prayers of the congregation, joining with those of the infant's relations, and ascending together to heaven, were equally beneficial to all, not only bringing down their blessing on the babe, but on those who join in the ceremony; and, in the words of the Rubric, causing that 'every man present be put in remembrance of his own profession, made to God in his baptism.' When her brother-in-law, Chatham, said that it was an old fashion, and quite in disuse at the present day, she replied, 'Old fashions were often founded on right reason and religious principle, and assuredly all the rules laid down in the Book of Common Prayer were for the furtherance of Christian unity, and brotherly love and charity.' Pynsent quite agreed with his sister; and as they were to be godfather and godmother,—Uncle Timothy being the other sponsor, for whom Uncle James acted as proxy,—Chatham and Anna let them have it as they would.

Accordingly, on a delicious morning in May, the whole family set out for church, some in the car, and some walking across the fields. Baby, in the most magnificent of robes, caps, hats,

and cloaks, was in the best of humours, and certainly looked a child of whom any mother might be proud. He, with his nurse, Aunt Betsey, and Uncle James, went inside the car, which Chatham drove. Anna had a fancy to walk once more across those dear old fields with Jessie and Pynsent before she went away to that far foreign country, where the beautiful spring flowers and breezes of exhilarating May would exist for her but in memory. Half-gay, half-sad, she hunted amongst the furze bushes, as she went on, for the white and blue violets that scented their paths, but hid themselves from their eyes; or she paused in the rich green meadows to gather the full, luscious cowslips, of which she had made the huge tisty-tosty in her childhood; or plucked the pale, faint blossom of the cuckoo-flower, that seemed to her to be the type of infancy. Volatile as the birds, and even more changing in her moods, she almost flew from one well-remembered spot to another, pointing out to her brother and sister each field or tree or brook that had been their favourite haunts all their lives, and recalling some scene connected with them. From an outbreak of enjoyment she would suddenly relapse into momentary sadness, and the tears would start into her eyes when she thought of the speedy parting, and, above all, of her darling child. Jessie, less excited, but not less touched by the prospect of separation, and the doubtful lot of her beautiful sister, tried to draw her mind to think of the solemn ceremony they were so soon to go through. But Anna's heart was in the past and future; and whilst the flowers, the birds, the brooklet, the very rejoicing sunshine, recalled the happy days of her childhood, the loving words and looks of Jessie, and the kind, manly tones of Pynsent, made her think of the time when she should be far from them, following her husband, perhaps, to a soldier's grave. Never had those distant church bells sounded so sadly-sweet to the soul of Anna; never before had the rejoicing cry of the cuckoo sent such a painful thrill through her heart. Should she ever hear them again? Should she ever again tread those fields to go to the house of God?

'Jessie,' she said, when she at last settled into a more sober walk, leaning on her brother's arm, 'will you, when I am far away, try to think as little as possible of my faults, and as much as you can of my good qualities, if I have any?'

'My dearest Anna,' said Jessie, 'I scarcely know whether you have bad qualities or not; if you have, love is so blind that I cannot see them,—at least,' she added, with her characteristic adherence to truth, 'if I see them they soon fade away from before me, and I forget them.'

'And will you forgive me all the trouble and grief I have caused you during our whole lives? It seems to come before me at this moment in a great mass, as if, when I am parted from you, the remembrance of it would never leave me. There is something depressing in the joy and beauty of nature when the heart is sad. Will you forgive me?'

'My darling Anna, I have nothing to forgive; I can only love you.'

'O yes! yes! You have had much to forgive,—always—all my life. And you, Pynsent, will you forgive me—wholly, from your heart? I know I have always tried to tease and annoy you, but it was not from real wickedness or want of affection, only mischief. I have courage to say it now, for the first time; the prospect of parting makes one feel so strange. Will you forgive all I have ever done to offend you?'

'Let me see!' said Pynsent, trying to laugh off Anna's sadness. 'Can I forgive all the pill-boxes filled with little bread pills; the medicine-bottles with coloured water; the dusters pinned to my coat-tails; the anonymous letters from imaginary patients; the pert speeches on my old-fashioned appearance; the hints at my cross temper; the proud looks when I would not admire the little beauty; the sly pinches and tugs at my hair and nose,—all the impertinences of my younger sister? How can you have the conscience to ask me, Anna?'

'But my graver faults, Pynsent? I cannot jest to-day; to-morrow we shall part.'

'Not so, Anna, for I mean to see you off. It is my turn to take a holiday now. Jessie has had hers, and I will not be cheated.'

'My dear brother! how very, very kind! Chatham will feel this, I know. You cannot tell how much he needs a real friend in many ways. He has such acute feelings, that he blames himself for everything, whereas I am quite as much to blame.'

'What do you mean, Anna?' asked Jessie.

'Oh, nothing serious; only we are rather in debt, and shall have no time to get out of it. I know it was very wrong, but we did it to please one another, and to make our friends happy. Do not shake your head, Pynsent; if you will only advise Chatham, I am sure he can manage. Get him to sell his dogs and horses before we go away, and to arrange so as to start fair, and I promise to keep clear again, and so will he. Our great trouble is lest it should come to the ears of the Countess: we would rather do anything than offend or annoy her. Chatham must manage to run down and see her before we leave. I declare,

there he is, and I have been crying; if he sees me with red eyes, he will think you have been lecturing me.'

'The bells have stopped, baby is housed at the Vicarage, aunt and uncle have gone into church, and I have come to look after the lost sheep,' said Chatham, advancing. 'What's the matter, Anna?' he added, casting rather an angry look at Pynsent, whom he regarded somewhat in the light of a bear.

'I have been sentimentalizing over these old fields and flowers, and fifty things, that is all,' said Anna, taking her husband's arm, and proceeding in advance of the others.

'Does my Anna regret?' said Chatham, always jealous to absurdity of Anna's love.

Anna pressed his arm, and looked at him, smiling through her tears. He was satisfied, and they quickened their steps.

The service had begun when they entered the church, and the congregation were on their knees. In the hurry of their entry into their pew, Chatham and Anna had placed themselves directly opposite the Michelson seat. When they first saw the red curtains they felt uneasy, but when, within the red curtains, they perceived Mr. Michelson in person, they felt a shock that nearly sent them on their knees again. The father's eyes literally met those of the son and daughter-in-law, neither party being aware that the other was in the neighbourhood. That all three speedily looked upon their Prayer Books, may be readily imagined; that Chatham and Anna never looked off them, may be also understood; but that Mr. Michelson placed himself behind the curtains, so as to command the pew opposite with his ill-omened eyes, and used them and his glass to good or evil purpose, need be told. He had arrived at the Hall the night before, as usual, unexpected by his servants, and, as usual, had gone to church. He was a man who always kept up the outward proprieties of life, and was very strict in his notions concerning the necessity of being seen behind the red curtains once a-week, book and eyeglass in hand. He was looking ill. His cheeks had lost a trifle of their roundness and colour, and his eyes somewhat of their bold brightness. His hair was a shade less glossy, and in a certain spot on the crown of his head was brushed out of its usual course, in order to conceal the beginning of a small bald patch.

The sudden appearance of the great man disturbed the devotions of the inmates of the Fairfield pew not a little, and the nurse and baby actually entered the church unperceived by them, and were at the pew-door before even Anna rememberd that they ought to be expecting them towards the close of the second lesson.

The sight of the child, however, diverted their thoughts from

his grandpapa,—grand in every sense of the word. He was asleep, and looked as lovely as any sleeping infant ever looked; and nothing earthly is more lovely than a sleeping infant.

The font stood very nearly central between the two pews, so that Mr. Michelson, willingly or unwillingly, was compelled to hear and see the whole baptismal rite. Through the aperture in the curtain he watched all the proceedings, and although he offered no prayer, and made no response with those of the assembled congregation, bent not the knee, and raised not the body from the seat as if in token of disapprobation and disgust, still the holy service, the kneeling forms around the font, and the beautiful babe, entered like iron into his soul.

He was awhile forgotten by those whose fate, in spite of himself, was entwined in his own, but he could not forget them. He saw even the tear that trembled in Anna's eye, as the solemn service was read that made her sweet babe a Christian. He saw that babe awake from his sleep, and, looking round him with wondering eyes, at last recognise and smile at his father. He watched the kneeling forms of those who prayed that the child might 'be born again, and become an heir of salvation,' and heard them promise in his name 'to renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, and the carnal desires of the flesh.' He listened to the supplications of the priest, joined in and responded to by all the congregation but himself, for the eternal welfare and present regeneration of his own grandchild; and saw him taken into the arms of that priest, and signed with the 'sign of the cross,' in token that in after-life he should not be 'ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified.' The name 'Pynsent Chatham Burton Michelson' had also sounded in his ears, and seemed to remain engraved upon his mind. This combination grated harshly upon him. Finally, he heard the exhortation given to the parents, godfathers, and godmothers, to see 'that the infant be taught, so soon as he should be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession he had made,' 'remembering always, that baptism doth represent unto us our profession, which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him.'

Could he hear and see all this untouched? God, who seeth the heart, alone can tell. He knew that the child and his parents belonged to him, and that he had renounced them all. He felt, when he looked at them, that he was a lonely man, without one real blessing to make life happy. He was conscious of a something beautiful, holy, and soothing in the kneeling forms of the young father and mother and loving relatives; the innocent, helpless infant; the simple, heavenly service. When

it was all over, and the congregation still remained on their knees to offer one short, silent prayer, each in his own words, for the good of the young immortal, just admitted into Christ's Church, he bent his head in his hand. Perhaps he too prayed. Perhaps the proud, cold, impalpable nature was momentarily softened, and he may have asked for a blessing on his innocent grandchild. Perhaps the first stone was laid for building up, hereafter, the faith of Christ in his own soul. Who shall say? Strange and imperceptible are the workings of the Spirit of God.

Poor Anna was quite overcome when she returned to the seat. The low sob might have been heard, as she thought of her speedy separation from the babe whose spiritual state she seemed never to have considered until that day. Mr. Michelson, who was standing according to his custom whilst the Litany was read, was attracted by the sound to look into the pew through the red curtain, and again saw Chatham and Anna kneeling side by side, the manly arm thrown for a moment round the waist of the agitated wife, as if to assure her of comfort and support. Mr. Michelson sat down, and from that moment kept his eyes turned to his Prayer Book.

When the service was concluded, he hastily left the church, evidently to avoid being brought into contact with those connected with him. As he walked on through the churchyard, he did not return quite as majestically as usual the bows and curtseys that awaited him, but with downcast eyes trod the path that led to the Hall. The nurse and his little grandchild were coming to meet the parents, and the child was crowing and making various infantine noises. The nurse had seen the grand gentleman, in the grand pew with the red curtains, looking with apparent interest at the christening through the aperture aforementioned. She did not know who he was, but had no doubt that he must be a friend of her master and mistress. She curtseyed and smiled blandly, and, seeing him about to pass her with averted eyes, held the baby up to be looked at, as much as to say, 'How can you pass such a beautiful child unnoticed?' The unconscious infant crowed, and half stretched out his little hands. Mr. Michelson was quite taken by surprise. He felt impelled to pause a moment and look at his grandson. The full dark eyes of Anna flashed upon him in the babe. Perhaps there was a hidden spring of tenderness somewhere in his heart, for he always felt an inclination for children; we have already seen this more than once. He could not resist the outstretched arms. He patted the cheek of the lovely boy, and was going on, when the little hand caught, unconsciously, hold of his finger. This was irresistible. How could any one, with the thousandth

part of a heart, refuse such an appeal? He hemmed and fidgeted, and gently disengaged his finger, and again patted the dear, soft cheek. A momentary tenderness stole into his bold blue eye. His hand crept into his pocket, and drew out a sovereign, which he gave the nurse. 'Do not name this on any account; do not say that I have seen the child,' he said, and passed on.

Of course the nurse, as soon as she met her mistress, gave an exaggerated account of the meeting, and Anna told it to Chatham, and they were both so moved by it that they resolved to write a farewell letter to their father. But Uncle James heard in the course of the evening that he had again taken his departure, which appeared so decided a hint that he meant to have nothing to say to them, that they deferred the letter to some more convenient season.

They were obliged to leave Fairfield themselves the following morning. Hasty arrangements were made concerning the baby. Poor Jessie received him reluctantly, it must be confessed,—he was such a charge and responsibility. Chatham was to order his agents in town to pay her fifty pounds a year for his maintenance, and that of a nurse. She would not hear of more, at present, though their ideas were magnificent, as usual, and willed her a hundred and fifty.

The parting was dreadful. This was perhaps Anna's first real sorrow, and she gave way to the excess of her maternal feelings unrestrainedly. It was more than her friends could bear to see her all that morning with her child,—now giving him into the arms of Jessie, and conjuring her to be a mother to him; now casting her own arms round both, and pressing hot kisses and hotter tears upon their lips alternately; then turning to Chatham and assuring him that she would follow him to the world's end, but that a mother's feelings were so strong—so strong! again on her knees before his little cradle when he slept, her arms cast over it, her eyes fixed on his cherub face, her heart beating quick, quick, with her efforts to restrain the sobs that she knew might wake him. And then the babe's unconsciousness: that soft, regular breathing—those laughing lips —the tight little hand clasped round the finger on which was her wedding ring!—She felt that her heart must break. And Chatham stood over the mother and child, scarcely less affected. He covered his eyes with his hand, to hide the full, large tears that were swelling in them, and, leaning on the head of the cradle, sobbed with his wife. Their first-born! Was this the anguish of parting with a child? What must be that of losing one?—Not greater, they felt assured; they thought they could

not suffer more and live. Gently Anna untied the little cap-string,—softly, tenderly, she uplifted the silky hair,—breathlessly she cut off two glossy, tiny tresses. She kissed the hair; she kissed the little hand; she breathed kisses and prayers over the sweet, smiling face; and, knowing that her sobs must either have vent or break her heart, she rose, and in her husband's arms poured out, as it were, her very soul in tears. God knows that a mother's love is stronger than all other love!

Poor Anna! She had looked forward with some pleasure, and the utmost curiosity and excitement, to going to India. It had been one of the inducements to her engaging herself to Nelson. But now the actual event was about to take place, how changed everything seemed! She had not realized the fact that all the admiration, all the gaiety, all the splendour that either the east or west can give us, cannot compensate for the one great agony of parting for years from those dearest to us. She did not know that it is better to live in quiet and comparative poverty with those who love us, than to dwell in luxury with those who merely admire us, or court us for some extraneous good. She now felt the love of a mother at her heart. What was the flattery of the world to this? She felt the true, tender, deep affection of a sister working within her, never so true, so tender, or so deep before. What was a life of pleasure without this? What if sorrow or sickness or death should go with her, or find her in a foreign land! What if her husband should be killed in battle! It would be all over then with the allurements of pleasure, and she would be far away from home, friends, and all that loved her. When she clasped Jessie in her arms for the last time, and saw her turn away with her hands covering her eyes, and her frame convulsed with sobs, she knew that no new ties could ever wind around her heart, and draw it as those old ones did. What was India, what was the whole world, at that moment? Sister, almost mother,—they might never meet again!

Oh, it seems a strange, hard, unnatural world, and a still more unnatural state of society, when hearts almost break at partings such as these! God forgive those who cause 'wars and rumours of wars,' for surely if the whole amount of agony they occasion could be gathered into one vast heap, it would overset the world.

Pynsent helped his brother-in-law to arrange his affairs, and between them they succeeded in placing them tolerably straight. The sale of carriages, hunters, and dogs enabled them to pay off most of the debts, and the pay just received defrayed the rest, and bought the proper outfit. True, they left England poor, or

would have done so, had not Uncle Timothy presented Anna with a bank-note of a hundred pounds, which he had just received from a rich and grateful patient.

Chatham and Anna both managed to visit Plas Ayron for a couple of days, and to take their last farewell of the venerable Countess. They never saw her again. They were enabled to renew their thanks, so often expressed by letter, for the happiness she had caused them; and she had the gratification of believing that she had really made them happy. They confessed to her that they had been extravagant, but assured her that it was for the first and last time in their lives, and that they had never forgotten or wholly disregarded her advice and wishes. She believed them, and in her love for them, and theirs for her, was repaid for all she had done. Her memory often kept them in after life from folly; and faulty as they too frequently were, they never wholly forgot her advice, or the generous means she had employed to make them good and happy. The Lady Georgiana and her children were equally glad to see them, and sorry to bid them farewell.

Uncle Timothy and Pynsent saw them embark for India. The parting was a very sad one, though all tried hard to be courageous. Pynsent felt for the first time how well he really loved this spoiled, pet sister; and, whilst watching the vessel glide smoothly over the ocean on her outward course, he forgot all her little vanities, capricious moods, and tantalizing ways, and only remembered that he had never loved her as he ought. Many undeserved and some deserved self-reproaches assailed him, as he wished he had been a tenderer brother, and a more willing aider of Jessie in her efforts to direct that wayward heart. But the past was past, and he could only hope and pray for the future.

CHAPTER XXXI.

'Oh, fie upon this single life! forego it.
We read how Daphne, for her peevish flight,
Became a fruitless bay tree; Syrinx turned
To the pale empty reed; Anaxarete
Was frozen into marble: whereas those
Which married, or proved kind unto their friends,
Were, by a gracious influence, transshaped
Into the olive, pomegranate, mulberry;
Became flowers, precious stones, or eminent stars.'

JOHN WEBSTER.

THE next important event at Fairfield was the marriage of Uncle James and Aunt Betsey. As may be supposed, it excited much mirth in the neighbourhood; but the gentleman was too happy, and the lady too proud, to care for what people said about them. In their own family the case was different. Many were the opinions broached; and when Uncle Timothy wrote to Jessie upon the subject, and poured out his disapprobation, she was compelled to suppress the letter, and in her reply to entreat him to write to Uncle James kindly and considerately.

Aunt Betsey was resolved to have everything in proper style, and arranged with such a degree of state as befitted the Burton family. Accordingly a suitable *trousseau* was provided, and the friends on both sides, who were indeed mutual friends, invited to the wedding. The Grange was furbished and furnished, by Jessie's directions, into a highly respectable family mansion, and she was desired to spare no expense. Uncle James himself suddenly returned to his boyhood. It was delicious to see him jump with resolute agility over stiles that he had climbed with some difficulty a few months back, in order to assist the dignified and graceful Miss Betsey, magnificent in silks and feathers; to watch him stoop to pick up her handkerchief, play with her knitting-cotton, blush when he inadvertently touched her hand, rush about with plates of toast and cake, to the delight of Pynsent, who had a decided objection to the task, and finally laugh at himself with one of his hilarious 'Haw! haw! haws!' when he suddenly remembered that he might be making a fool of himself. It would have been ridiculous, had it not been the result of feelings so pure, and a love so constant and enduring, to see him present the loveliest rose, with the half bursting bud, to the object of his adoration. It was ridiculous—no, not quite ridiculous, because Aunt Betsey was always dignified—but peculiar, to mark the reception of the gift. Aunt Betsey would

bend over it, and with a dainty finger and thumb place it in her bosom *en princesse*. She was really beginning to feel a few sparks of the tender passion, and thought that if her lover was a little less loud, and adhered more strictly to the rules of grammar, he would be quite gentleman-like, as he undoubtedly was handsome.

Upon Jessie, as usual, fell all the labour,—the making of cakes and tarts, the arrangement of the house, the consultations about the dresses, and, above all, the keeping in order of Captain Burford and Pynsent. Oh, the entreating glances, the powerful private lecturings, she expended in vain upon those incorrigible tricksters! Every good joke was brought to bear upon poor Uncle James, who, to do him justice, took it very good-humouredly; but Aunt Betsey resented every insult with a calm dignity that became her.

'Uncle,' said Pynsent one day, when the lover had been in attendance, and seemed in a fluster of excitement upon the approaching event, 'how do *you* feel in your present condition?'

'Very comfortable, sir, and I advise you to cultivate the same,' was the reply.

'Then it does not make you ill, as it does some people?'

'Never better in my life, boy; I am quite young again. Haw! haw!'

'Do you know this morning Giles Miller sent for me?'

'Pynsent,' interrupted Jessie, 'come here a moment.'

'Let's have Giles Miller first,' said the Captain. 'He is going to be married, is he not?'

'There is the extraordinary part of the affair! Excuse me, Aunt Betsey. He called me in as I passed, and said he felt strange sensations. Do you feel strange sensations, uncle?'

'There's a strange sensation for you, nevy!' said Uncle James, giving him a heavy slap on the back with his broad palm.

'You have no feeling, uncle. "Well, Giles," said I, "you are in love, and you must describe your sensations accurately, as they are in no medical book that I am acquainted with. Where is the seat of it?"—"I feel it working here like barm, sir!" exclaimed Giles, striking his left side with his hand, and looking very much moved. I considered gravely, as in duty bound; then advised him to swallow a bushel of flour, sit quietly by the fire till it was leavened, then run about a long time to work it into bread, and finally get into the oven and bake it. "If that doesn't calm your sensations, Giles," I added, "I know not what will."'

'Haw! haw! haw!' shouted Uncle James. 'Not a bad description, is it, ma'am?' turning to Aunt Betsey. 'I swear I have felt like barm in me a thousand times.'

Between jests and gibes, the time before the marriage fled on. Uncle Timothy, somewhat mollified by Jessie, came down to give the youthful bride away, and Jessie was bridesmaid. Uncle Timothy was the most intractable of the party. He was very susceptible of ridicule, as old bachelors occasionally are, and could not get over the absurdity of the match. He would have been better satisfied had Aunt Betsey been more suitable, but he had frequent occasion to look through his favourite Epistle to his namesake Timothy, which he always considered as particularly addressed to himself, to find texts upon patience and forbearance. His conscience pricked him when he came to the words 'forbidding to marry;' and, addressing an imaginary bookshelf, as he walked up and down his bedroom at Fairfield, he accused himself thus: 'Timothy! Timothy! perhaps thou art one of those "seducing spirits" who "forbid to marry;" perhaps also thou dost indulge in "vain babblings." Thou must not go against nature, son Timothy;' and so he tried to reconcile himself to having Aunt Betsey for a sister-in-law. To show that he wished her well, he made her a present of a handsome gold watch and chain, which glittered conspicuously on the wedding morning over the silver-grey satin dress. Aunt Betsey's attire was highly becoming, being neither too juvenile nor too antique for her years and the occasion. She certainly looked a splendid woman in the white bonnet and ostrich feather, and Uncle James was very proud of her.

It all went off well. It was cheering to hear the hearty voice of Uncle James, as he pronounced the words after the clergyman, as resolutely as if he had been talking to his huntsman, and said the 'I will' so loud, that it resounded through the church, and made Jessie start. Aunt Betsey was becomingly nervous and modest; shed a few tears, trembled, and blushed; but, on the whole, behaved with her customary dignity.

When all was over, and the happy couple and Uncle Timothy had started for London, where, be it said, neither bride nor bridegroom had been before, Pynsent and Jessie settled themselves down as bachelor and old maid brother and sister, with feelings of very decided contentment. They considered that they were beginning the life they had planned for themselves years ago in good earnest, only a little earlier than they intended. They had both made up their minds never to marry, and that with more intention of keeping their resolution than most people of seven or eight and twenty have when they make such a one. They were devotedly attached to one another, and always peaceable and happy together; and although Pynsent was not reconciled to his country practice, which he followed against the grain, still

he tried to make the best of it. He had too generous a heart to accumulate a fortune; for he could not press for money, or indeed take it, from the greater proportion of his patients, and his principal practice was amongst the poor.

He had, unfortunately, work at home as well as abroad, for Anna's baby proved, as the London doctors had predicted, a sickly child, and occasioned both him and Jessie great anxiety. Many sleepless and prayerful nights did they pass with the poor suffering infant, whilst his parents were on the wide ocean, unconscious of his state, save by sympathy, which doubtless drew Anna's heart to her baby at such times. But they nursed and doctored him through the various diseases of infancy, all of which he seemed to have worse than any child that was ever born before, and in due course of time were amply repaid for their trouble, in seeing their little nephew grow up a fine strong child, the delight and admiration of everybody. As Jessie had him all to herself, she brought him up judiciously, and resolutely abstained from spoiling him.

Thus more years passed on,—quietly at home, uneasily abroad. 'Wars and rumours of wars' in India kept the pair of country mice in continual anxiety; and the birth and death of two babies made Anna's letters sad to receive and read. Chatham, too, was continually engaged in active service; and poor Anna, following him as near and as well as she could, had found India anything but the paradise she had expected.

One great and supreme pleasure had cheered Jessie during this period,—she had had one or two good and friendly letters from Nelson. The Captain thought them precursors of future happiness. Jessie saw in them, and knew that they contained nothing more than the words of a friend who esteemed her, and professed himself benefited by her advice. Nelson appeared to be carrying out his resolution of making glory his mistress. Not from himself, but from the Indian journals, they learned his exploits. Wherever danger was greatest and battle fiercest, he was sure to be found, and promotion was rapid accordingly. He obtained his captaincy for his conduct on a very dangerous expedition against the natives, into the interior of India, when he was the first to scale a fort, and to lead his men, but few in number, on to victory. Jessie's greatest delight, when the news reached her, was that by his forbearance and gallantry he had induced the unhappy natives to capitulate, and was honourably mentioned for his lenity. She could never understand what right any nation had, whether Christian or heathen, to make inroads into the countries of peaceful people, for the mere desire of conquest, and looked upon glorious England not unfrequently as a marauder or freebooter, because she had borne her victorious arms into places where she

had no natural right to enter at this time. She increased her already superabundant stock of avocations by the study of languages, and at every spare moment she might have been seen with the French and Italian dictionaries and grammars before her, which Anna had left behind when she went to India. She had heard that nothing was so good as study to withdraw the mind from itself, and accordingly she began in good earnest. She would laugh heartily when she suddenly recollected that she was verging upon thirty years of age when she began her studies; nevertheless she persevered, and banished many an unhappy thought by so doing.

CHAPTER XXXII.

'Thus with the year
Seasons return, but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
Or flocks or herds, or human face divine;
But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair
Presented with an universal blank
Of Nature's works, to me expunged and rased,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.'—MILTON.

JESSIE was sitting one evening at the afore-mentioned work and studies, when Pynsent returned home bringing a letter for her. It was from Tiny, and its contents greatly alarmed both the brother and sister. It said,—

'MY DEAREST JESSIE,

'My mother and I have just been to Duke Street, in the hope of seeing Mr. Barnard, who is, you probably know, very ill. We have been to the house several times lately, but Mrs. Hicks has always sent us away, assuring us that her master was too ill to see any one. At last I got so very, very anxious, that I was determined to waylay the doctor. I went, therefore, early to Duke Street alone, and fortunately soon saw a gentleman leaving the house, who I thought might be a physician. His carriage was at the door, and when it was driving away I called to the coachman to stop. I told him that I wanted to speak particularly to the gentleman, who immediately put his head out, and begged me to come into the carriage, as he was in a hurry. I did so, and he kindly answered all my inquiries about your dear uncle. He

said that he had been one of the most active medical men in London during this awful cholera, and that he had not spared himself night or day. Although he had not caught the dreadful disease, he had so over-tasked his strength, and his mind had been so upset by the scenes he had witnessed, that he was taken dangerously ill. It seemed a general cold and weakness through his system,—a kind of influenza,—but unfortunately it had settled in his head and eyes, so that he is nearly blind. The doctor told me that his sight was never very good, and had been much injured by long study and attention to his profession. You know, my dear Jessie, that he once told you that he had a kind of fear of cataract. If he recovers from this illness, he *may* be blind for life. The doctor did not say *must*, but *may*, so there is hope. When I had told the doctor how good Mr. Barnard had been to me, and that I knew all his relations, he said that he was astonished that none of you came to him at such a time. Mrs. Hicks had written frequently, and he had left notes to be enclosed in hers, but still the good, excellent, best of men (so he called him) was left to die alone. Your uncle frequently asked whether any one had come from Fairfield, and excuses were made to account for your silence and absence, which seemed to trouble him. Mrs. Hicks managed the house, and attended to him entirely, and, the doctor added, thoroughly did her duty. Now I feel assured that either these letters have never been sent, or you have never received them. It is of no use for us to ask to be allowed to see him again, because Mrs. Hicks does not choose that we should do so. I hope you will come to London, and if you have time, be so very kind as to let me hear from you '—

'We must start instantly,' here interrupted Pynsent. 'There has been either some infamous deceit, or great mistake.'

'Certainly,' said Jessie; 'there is not one moment to lose. You had better go over at once to Uncle James, ask Aunt Betsey to take care of little Chatham, and see what they say about the matter. Meanwhile I will pack up some clothes ready for the mail to-morrow morning.'

Pynsent found his uncle and aunt, as he expected, in the parlour,—become, by the taste and management of the latter, almost a modern drawing-room. Aunt Betsey was sitting, as usual, by the fire, knitting, dignified as ever, and very handsomely dressed; Uncle James was seated by her side, a round table before him, on which was the newspaper that he had been reading, but which had been laid down to enable him the better to reply to some question of Aunt Betsey's upon the politics of the day. His spectacles were pushed back upon his

forehead, to give him the advantage of seeing her with his natural vision, and his hand rested on the arm of her chair. He was quite as rubicund, portly, and good-humoured as ever. Perhaps both he and his wife looked younger than they did some five years ago, when we took leave of them on their marriage day; certain it is that they looked happier. He had lost none of his bluff hospitality, or ready kindliness, only it was softened in her presence. She was as stately, genteel, precise, and proud in her married as she had been in her maiden state. She was every day becoming more satisfied with her husband, as he became more gentlemanlike under her influence. She was even nurturing a kind of affection for him, which might in the course of years, by the time he was seventy, ripen into as much love as she was capable of feeling for any person not decidedly patrician. She managed her house well, and had so awed his half-wild domestics by her stately gravity, that they had become tame animals in the house, and crouched before her as such. The old Grange was turned from a huge farmhouse once more into the manor-house which it originally was; and its master and mistress into the country gentleman and lady of the old school.

Pynsent and Jessie looked with the utmost astonishment upon the two oldest representatives of the Burtons and Barnards. The former declared that Ovid's Metamorphoses were nothing to Uncle James and his house, and set to wondering what there could be in the mere influence of love, the passion he despised, to effect such changes.

'Dang my buttons!' said Uncle James, 'but if that woman ought not to be flayed alive! I beg your pardon, my dear,' turning apologetically to his wife, 'but isn't it too bad?'

'Too bad, indeed,' said Mrs. Barnard, with a severe air.

These animadversions were lavished upon Mrs. Hicks, when Pynsent had read Tiny's letter.

'We must all set off at once,' said Uncle James, 'all of us,—don't you think so, my dear?'

'Not exactly; I cannot see the utility of such a proceeding. What do you think, Pynsent?'

'I agree with you, aunty. If you would take little Chatham here, and let Jessie and me go'—

'And leave me at home, sir,—his own brother!' exclaimed Uncle James. 'Well, to be sure! the young people of this generation do think themselves wiser than their elders. What do you think, ma'am?'

'My dear Mr. Barnard, you are your own master.'

'I beg your pardon, my dear. When you did me the honour to marry me, I ceased to be my own master, and willingly

allowed myself to be governed. Nevy Pynsent, your aunt shall decide.'

'Oh, the child may come here, Pynsent, if you think he is at all tractable. He is a sweet child, and the picture of Anna,' she said.

Another metamorphosis! Pynsent expected a world of opposition, and Aunt Betsey yielded at once.

'With your leave, my dear,' said Uncle James, 'I must go to Lunnun with the young folks. If anything was to happ n to Brother Timothy, I should never forgive myself. Bless my soul! didn't he come all the way from Lunnun to see Jessie when I asked him? and didn't he come to our wedding,—the proudest day of my life? and shall I delay to go to see him when he is sick? What do you say, my dear?'

'I think you should go, Mr. Barnard, decidedly, though it will be lonely here without you.'

'Ah, Pynsent, my boy, marry!' cried Uncle James. 'There's a pattern lady for you, sir! Go and seek for the counterpart of your beautiful aunt, boy, and marry!'

'Where shall I find her, uncle? But are you quite decided to go?'

'Quite; to-morrow, by mail. Blind! that isn't possible, is it, Pynsent? Timothy blind! I don't believe that, and I won't believe it, anyhow.'

'I hope not,' said Pynsent. 'Then, aunty, will you come and fetch Chatham. He is very entertaining now, and will, I think, prevent your feeling dull during our absence. We will write constantly.'

'I shall make a point of writing every day, my dear,' said Uncle James proudly, who had never written half-a-dozen letters in his life, with the exception of the daily bulletins during the fever.

'To-morrow, at the inn, then, uncle, we had better meet there. Thank you, Aunt Betsey, you are really kind,' said Pynsent, as he made his exit.

The following day, Uncle James, Pynsent, and Jessie started for London, and duly arrived at Mr. Timothy Barnard's house in Duke Street. Mrs. Hicks had never seen Jessie before, and gave her a glance of anything but satisfaction, when she found that she had come on purpose to nurse her uncle. She insisted that her letters must have miscarried, and inwardly wondered how the newcomers could have been informed of Mr. Barnard's illness, as she had never written at all.

They did not think it wise to disturb the invalid at five o'clock in the morning, especially as Mrs. Hicks assured them that he was

sleeping, and somewhat better; therefore they rested, for a couple of hours, on such sofas and beds as were available. As early as appeared to them discreet, Pynsent went to the house of the physician, Dr. Manson, in order to make more particular inquiries concerning his uncle, and to beg him to return with him to Duke Street. Dr. Manson appeared rejoiced to find that his patient's friends had arrived, and said that he thought the sooner he knew of their being in the house the better. He returned with Pynsent at once, and prepared Uncle Timothy for the arrival of his relations, quitting the apartment as soon as he had whispered to his patient that his friends were near. The room was very nearly dark, and so indistinct was the outline of the bed, that they would scarcely have been able to make directly for it, had not a low sob from the dear relative upon it attracted them aright. Jessie advanced first, and, leaning over the pillow, murmured,—

'We are here, my dear, dear uncle.'

'Thank God!' was the almost inaudible response, as he kissed his niece, and feebly returned the pressure of his brother's tender grasp.

They could not speak for some time, each trying to overcome emotions that ought not to burst forth. Uncle James's broad chest was heaving with suppressed feeling. He had not realized the possibility of his brother's being really as weak as an infant, and blind.

Uncle Timothy was the first to speak, at least to breathe words that Jessie was obliged to put her ear to his lips to hear.

'You are very good—God is merciful—you will stay now?'

'We will not leave you, dear uncle.'

'We would have come sooner, but for that old'— began Uncle James.

'Hush!' whispered Pynsent. 'There has been a mistake about letters, uncle, or we should have been with you long ago.'

'All will be well now,' said Jessie. 'Perhaps you had better go to the doctor, Pynsent, and take Uncle James with you for a short time.'

The pair left the room, and Jessie sat awhile in silence by her uncle's bed, holding his thin hand in hers.

Mrs. Hicks came in with breakfast, and Uncle Timothy whispered, 'Give it me yourself, my dear;' upon which Jessie took the tray, saying to the housekeeper, 'You will allow me to wait on my uncle to-day, it is so long since I have had the pleasure of doing so.' Mrs. Hicks assented with a look that,

it was fortunate for her, the darkness rendered invisible, and left the room in disgust.

Jessie was obliged to feed Uncle Timothy, he was so weak; and he took the nourishment at her hands with the submission of an infant, thankful that he had now some one of his kindred near him in his extremity. So it is always. Business, pleasure, science, any engrossing pursuit, is sufficient to the mind in time of health, to the exclusion frequently of the ties of blood; but when sickness comes, and death seems to hover upon the threshold, the soul pants for the presence and love of some one whom God and nature have appointed as a household ministering spirit. At such periods man acknowledges the wisdom and goodness of the Creator in implanting in the heart the love of kindred.

The first thing that Jessie did when she left her uncle's room, and was replaced therein by his brother and nephew, was to write to Tiny. In the course of the afternoon she and Mrs. Eveleigh arrived. They were both so much affected and excited, that it was some time before they could compose themselves. Mrs. Eveleigh particularly, who was in delicate health, was so deeply moved as to induce Tiny to take her for a time to another room. She returned alone, to explain.

'My mother,' she said, 'is so weak that she cannot bear the excitement of strangers, and we have been very anxious about Mr. Barnard, the more so as we could not hear the truth. He has been our best friend for years, and if he were to die, my mother thought we should be alone in the world.'

'What have you been doing all this time, Tiny?' asked Jessie. 'You are not well yourself.'

'We have our little school, and we are able to take in needlework, and I give lessons in drawing to two little girls to whom my drawing-master recommended me. I am quite well.'

Jessie looked at the child-woman with grave astonishment and pity. She was now nearly seventeen, but still so small and slight that she scarcely looked more than twelve. There were the colourless face, the deep, sad eyes, the mouth that seemed never to have smiled, of the Tiny of years gone by; but in addition there was the painful look that an overworked brain gives to the face of earnest womanhood, but still there was the finely-shaped head and forehead of genius. Shrinking and delicate as ever, she was even shy and reserved with Jessie, and it was with much effort that the latter succeeded in making her confess that she and her mother were frequently in distress.

'My dear Tiny,' said Jessie, putting her arm round the

trembling girl, and drawing her to her side on the sofa, 'does Uncle Timothy still continue to assist you?'

'He would do so, but we would rather he did not,' said Tiny, hesitating.

'Do you mean to say that you now live on your own resources?'

'People said that Mr. Barnard kept us, and we knew we had no right to be burdens upon his goodness; so my mother told him that we were now able to support ourselves, and so indeed we are.'

'And has Uncle Timothy given you up?'

'O no; he has frequently sent us money in a way that we could not refuse; still we would prefer his not doing so, for Mrs. Hicks finds it out, and tells some friends she has near us, who tell the parents of some of our little scholars, and so we lose the children, or perhaps our needlework. There is some mystery which I do not understand.'

'And so,' said Jessie, 'you toil, I fear, beyond your strength?'

'Not more than I have seen you do, Jessie, nor half as much, every day of your life. Whenever I lose courage I think of you, and am comforted and strengthened. It is my own fault if I look pale. I cannot give up drawing, and I work at it whenever I have a spare hour.'

'Is not your mother's health so bad as sometimes to prevent her working?'

'Very seldom; I tell her that she ought to refrain, but she is never idle as long as she is able to hold a needle or hear a child's lesson. I fear she suffers much very often, but she never complains. She is very good, and if it were not for me, would, I think, be glad to go to heaven, to my father.'

Jessie looked with pity on the fair, fragile girl beside her, but they could not be long alone together, as Uncle Timothy sent to say he wished Mrs. Eveleigh and Tiny to come to him for a short space, which they did, and were so much affected by finding him so reduced, that when they left him it was with difficulty that Mrs. Eveleigh could compose herself at all.

Pynsent proved the best comforter.

'I do not despair of my uncle, madam,' he said; 'his recovery must be slow, his blindness, for some time at least, certain, but I have great hope that he may be spared.'

'God bless you for the words, sir!' said Mrs. Eveleigh. 'We have suffered dreadful anxiety about him of late, and would have gladly come to nurse him if we had been allowed.'

'Of that we have no doubt, and only wish you had been here;

although we must be just enough to allow that Mrs. Hicks has not neglected him.'

'Hang Mrs. Hicks!' said Uncle James, coming into the room suddenly. 'Pynsent, Brother Timothy wants you. Well, my little Tiny, I suppose I am still a privileged old fellow, and may give you a kiss. You know I am married now. Don't tell Mrs. Barnard when you come to see us. Dang my buttons, if the child isn't grown! I never expected you to grow, my dear. But you are Tiny still,' he added, stroking her hair; 'and remember, if you can't exactly keep my house now, seeing I have got a—house—hem—wife, you can come and get rosy amongst us. You were always a favourite with Miss Betsey—Mrs. Barnard, I mean.'

'Thank you, sir,' said Tiny.

'Call me Uncle James, as you used, my dear; I hate being "sirred." And you, ma'am, it might do you good to come into the country. Jessie, my dear, what do you think?'

'I am sure it would, uncle. If Mrs. Eveleigh could come, I should be very glad to see her at Fairfield.'

Mrs. Eveleigh could only answer by tears; and Tiny perceiving that she looked faint and ill, proposed leaving. They were pressed to remain the day, but declined. Uncle James rang the bell.

'Tell the coachman to get my brother's carriage ready to take these ladies home,' he said, as Mrs. Hicks appeared.

'Ladies, indeed!' muttered Mrs. Hicks, as she went, unwillingly enough, to do his bidding.

'Good-bye, my dear,' said Uncle James, fumbling very much with something in his hand, which he at last managed to squeeze into Tiny's. 'From Mrs. Barnard, my dear.' It was a five-pound note. Uncle James always fancied he was made of money,—so did Uncle Timothy; it was a family failing. 'More in the bank to carry us home,' he muttered to himself.

Tiny had no time to remonstrate. She was in the carriage, and on her way home, before she well knew what her good friend had done.

'It makes one melancholy to look at her,' said Uncle James. 'God help 'em, poor hearts! I wonder who they are, and how on earth Brother Timothy picked 'em up.'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

'But if there be one attribute divine
With greater lustre than the rest can shine,
'Tis goodness which we every moment see
The Godhead exercise with such delight;
It seems, it only seems to be
The best-beloved perfection of the Deity,
And more than infinite.'—POMFRET.

SOME women seem to have been sent into this world on purpose to become nurses of the sick. They have an especial aptitude for the duty, and set about it as if they liked it. Jessie was one of them. Under her care Uncle Timothy made rapid progress, compared with his previous tardy steps. Pynsent also must have his share of credit. The physician who attended his uncle complimented him highly, and thought it a pity his talents should be buried in a country practice. But a new world was opening before him, almost without his seeking it. Providence was working for him what duty and affection had forbidden him to work for himself. The physician insisted on relinquishing to him the patients he had hitherto attended for his uncle, and he was thus thrown at once into an extensive London practice. But his youth! he knew that many patients who had been accustomed to his uncle's wig and cane would object to him because he had neither, and would look upon him as a doubtful doctor, even though he was simply a substitute.

'Miss Primmerton has sent for Mr. Barnard, ma'am,' said Mrs. Hicks, addressing Jessie in a whisper, who was standing at one end of her uncle's room, whilst Pynsent was sitting by his bedside talking to him. Uncle Timothy overheard.

'Miss Primmerton!' he said. 'You had better ask Dr. Manson. You are too young. She is very particular.'

'To come directly, sir, as one of the young ladies is very ill,' said Mrs. Hicks.

'Lend me your coat and wig, uncle,' said Pynsent. 'Mrs. Hicks, where are the coat and wig?'

'In that drawer, sir,' was the answer.

Pynsent was at the drawer in a moment, and had taken out those articles, before any one could interfere. Just as Jessie was exclaiming, 'Do not be so foolish, Pynsent,' and Uncle Timothy was laughing his very first laugh, he had put on the wig, and was putting on the coat.

'Now come with me, Jessie, into a lighter room, and see how

I look,' he said. 'Stop a minute. Go down-stairs to Uncle James and I will arrange my attire before my mirror.'

He left the room, followed by Jessie, exclaiming at his folly. She went to her Uncle James, however, who was in the library, and, after having been there a short time, was diverted at seeing Pynsent enter, transformed according to his professed intention. Still more diverted was she at seeing Uncle James rise ceremoniously at the sight of a stranger, and say,—

'I beg your pardon, sir; perhaps you wish to see my brother? I am sorry to say he is very ill.'

The stranger bowed his head.

'Could I take any message, sir?'

No reply.

'The dickens is in it! he must be deaf and dumb,' muttered Uncle James. 'Jessie, suppose you call Pynsent?'

Jessie could no longer keep her countenance. Uncle James looked more narrowly at the coat and wig.

'Impossible!' he exclaimed, in great alarm. 'Brother! Brother Timothy! are you all mad?'

'Deaf and dumb, uncle, that's all,' said Pynsent, rising from his chair, and standing in an imposing attitude before his uncle.

'Dang my buttons, sir, what's this? I declare you've frightened me out of a year's growth. Why, you look fifty to a day.'

'Then I shall just do for Miss Primmerton. I have cut off a quantity of hair, which I must say I rather regret, and the wig fits me admirably. I don't think either of the young ladies will fall in love with me. This wig may be worth five hundred a year to me,—who knows? Where is the gold-headed cane? There! now I am complete. Good-morning to you, ma'am;' and Pynsent made his exit with a low bow, entered his uncle's carriage, that was standing at the door, and drove off to Miss Primmerton's.

When he returned, Uncle James and Jessie both hastened to him to know the result.

'Capital!' said he. 'I introduced myself as a nephew of Mr. Barnard's; said I was attending his patients for him during a severe illness, and was happy to have the honour of waiting on Miss Primmerton. You should have seen the bow I made when I composed and delivered those last words. "Nephew!" said Miss Primmerton incredulously; it was evident that politeness alone prevented her suggesting the possibility of my having made a mistake in my own identity, and being his grandfather. "It is not possible that you can be Miss Anna Burton's brother?" I

never thought of this relationship, but bowed my assent, and muttered something about considerable difference of age. However, I need not have feared; she evidently considered me quite safe. It was not flattering to think that a mere wig could make one look so old,—a wig, too, that really makes Uncle Timothy look young. I was half inclined to abjure it, when I saw the pretty young lady I was to do my best to cure. I made rather more fuss than was necessary, of course, about moving her from the quarters in which her companions slept, but did not think the fever likely to be infectious, and so quieted Miss Primmerton's fears in the blandest voice I could assume. I could think of nothing but Anna's stories of Puss and the Happy Family, and I quite longed to ask my pretty patient what *sobriquet* she bore. Miss Primmerton made many inquiries after Uncle Timothy and Anna. She also asked for you, Jessie; and when I told her you were in London, she expressed her intention of "doing herself the pleasure of making your acquaintance." I think of confiding in Miss Primmerton, that I may ask her to give me a few lessons in polite speaking. It would be a fortune to a medical man to get up those well-turned periods. Imagine the effect one might produce by, "Allow me the honour of feeling your pulse;" or, "Permit me to have a view of your tongue;" "I trust your indisposition is beginning to abate;" "I have extreme pleasure in communicating to you the delightful fact that you are out of danger." But I must go and see Uncle Timothy, and then more patients. I never was so happy in my life.'

'Because you never before were in your proper element,' said Jessie, as her brother left the room. 'Oh, uncle, what a pity it is that he should be shut up in the country, when he does so long for an active London practice, and is really so well suited to it!'

'Ay, Jessie,' said Uncle James, 'I never thought so until this trip to London. He is quite another chap here,—so brisk! in such capital spirits, and so much more agreeable! to say nothing of his learning. I was dumbfounded the other day when I heard him and Dr. Manson disputing about some case they disagreed upon. Pyn didn't give in a bit, but stood his ground like a hero, and gave chapter and verse for all he argufied about, until Dr. Manson began to waver. Afterwards the doctor said to me, "That's a fine, clever, sensible fellow, that nephew of yours. He ought not to leave town. We want such clear-headed, active men here, and I should be very glad to give him a lift."'

'And that from one of the cleverest men in England!'

said Jessie. 'He shall not return to Fairfield, if I can help it.'

He did not return to Fairfield. Circumstances worked a change in Pynsent's destiny. Mr. Barnard did not die; but so long and painful was his illness, that he could scarcely be said to recover. It left him, not only weakened in body and mind, but almost blind. As most of the principal physicians and surgeons in London were his friends, so they all visited him as such. There was but one opinion of his state when he became convalescent, which was, that the only chance of his recovering either health or sight was his relinquishing all professional duty, and leaving London until he regained them. He had worked too hard, both bodily and mentally, for thirty years; and this severe illness had brought about the prostration and exhaustion of overwrought faculties. He was as gentle as a child, and appeared to have returned to his childhood. He frequently forgot the events that happened to him as yesterday, but had a keen remembrance of everything that had occurred at Fairfield from his boyhood. His interest in his profession had abated; and when it was proposed to him to return with his brother and niece to Fairfield, and to allow his nephew to remain in his place for a time, he pressed Jessie's hand, and said, smiling, that it was the very thing he wished; that he was good for nothing now but to feed her poultry, and to wander about the old place. He forgot, for the moment, that he was nearly blind.

And so it was settled; but there was much to arrange before the change of plans could take place. With her usual prudence, Jessie proposed that the state of her uncle's affairs should be looked into before Pynsent entered upon what might possibly be a permanent engagement, in a sphere so new to him. Little satisfactory intelligence could be gained from Uncle Timothy, beyond the fact that he had never saved money. The world looked upon him as a rich man, but his riches were, literally as well as figuratively, laid up 'in the kingdom of heaven.' There he must have had a large store, since all the proceeds of his very considerable profession had been spent in charity. Every year he had intended to lay by a portion of his income for his nephews and nieces and his little *protegée* Tiny, but each year had brought its customary demands on his purse, and he never found that he had more than enough money to pay his annual subscriptions, daily charities, and the expenses of his household. The latter, upon examination, were found to have been enormous; and there was little doubt but that his apparently faithful old servants had been making their fortunes, whilst he was spending his. There were a great many book-debts, which,

if paid, would realize a considerable sum of money; and there were the house and furniture, both of which were Mr. Barnard's private property: and this was all.

It took some weeks to come to a clear understanding of these matters, but it was at last arrived at. Uncle Timothy's health was too precarious and too precious to admit of his being much consulted, and he was not a man of business beyond his profession. Fortunately he had been always particular in his professional accounts, though not in sending them in. When they tried gently to make him understand the state of his affairs, he begged them to do what was best, and when he began work again, he would begin to put by for a rainy day. He did not seem to have the slightest regard for money, and only regretted his carelessness because it prevented his providing for Tiny, and continuing his allowance to Charles.

'Mrs. Hicks, too,' he said, 'poor Mrs. Hicks! what is to become of her?'

'Brother, you must be an innocent!' said Uncle James, letting escape the wrath that had been long bottled up. 'Did not Mrs. Hicks leave us in ignorance of your illness, because she was making a fortune by you? Dang my buttons, if there hasn't been bread and meat enough in your house in one year to keep Fairfield, labourers and all! Jessie says so. Oh! bachelors ought to marry. I never knew the necessity of matrimony till I had the happiness of taking my excellent wife for better for worse. I have saved a fortune already, Tim; and as soon as you get well, we will look you out a wife. Between ourselves, I believe Mrs. Hicks had her eye upon you.'

'Brother! brother!' said Uncle Timothy, with such a hopeless tone of voice that Jessie interfered to prevent mischief.

In due course of time they were rid of Mrs. Hicks; her tears and protestations were tremendous, when she received a civil but decided notice from Jessie, who told her that, as her uncle was going into the country, and his affairs were in a very unsettled state, he would not need her services any longer. Finding that Jessie was not to be bought over by assurances of attachment, she rushed up to her master, and asked if it was his intention to part with his faithful servant, who had lived only for him for so many years.

'My good Mrs. Hicks!' interjected Uncle Timothy, 'perhaps when I am better'—

'Odds boddikins, ma'am! are you mistress in my brother's house, or his niece?' began Uncle James.

'Uncle!' said Pynsent, who was fortunately present. 'Now, Mrs. Hicks, you will be so good as to come with me, and we will

just talk matters over quietly,' turning to that offended matron, and gently but firmly taking her out of the room. 'You see, Mrs. Hicks,' he continued, 'from various wonderful causes, my uncle's affairs are in a bad way. For a single man, we think he has lived, to say the least, very extravagantly; but I suppose he kept a great deal of company: am I right, Mrs. Hicks?'

'Hem! I cannot say that my master ever gave large parties,' said Mrs. Hicks evasively.

'At all events,' continued Pynsent quietly, 'his housekeeping has cost him enormous sums, and it may be found necessary to make more minute inquiries—for our satisfaction, you understand, as well as for yours—into the various ways in which they have been spent. You perceive, Mrs. Hicks, that he will not require a housekeeper at—fifty pounds a year, is it not?—when he will perhaps not have more than a hundred for himself. You understand?'

'Perfectly, sir. I am sure I never could have believed! I declare I am heart-broken! and everybody thought him as rich as ever could be. Poor gentleman! And when do you think he will go into the country, sir? and when do you suppose I had better leave? I am at the commands of the family, I am sure; only, as a lone woman, you see, I must have an eye to myself.'

'Precisely, Mrs. Hicks. As the French proverb says, "We should have one eye in the town, and the other in the country;" do you think you could manage to keep one eye in Somersetshire, and the other in London?'

Mrs. Hicks did not quite know what to make of Pynsent. 'Whatever you think best, I am sure, sir; but you see, I am a lone woman, a widow, and must set myself up in some small way; I should never have the heart to take another situation. My poor dear master.'

Thereupon Mrs. Hicks began to cry.

'We will not talk longer upon this painful subject, Mrs. Hicks,' said Pynsent; 'I see it is too much for you. But you will just look over your account-book,—for your own satisfaction,—and let us have some idea of the yearly housekeeping expenses. By the way, Mrs. Hicks, was the person you sent the letters to the post by trustworthy? it was so odd that so many miscarried. Will you tell me who was your messenger?'

'Dear sir! I can't remember exactly; I was in such a fluster all day long. Poor master so ill! I often ran with 'em myself, or gave 'em to anybody I could see.'

'Rather careless, considering your experience and years, Mrs. Hicks. Will you excuse my just calling my sister?'

Pynsent called Jessie.

'Mrs. Hicks quite understands the necessity of leaving, Jessie, but I thought you might wish to make those inquiries before she does so.'

'It is about Miss Eveleigh,' said Jessie. 'I wish to know upon what grounds you speak disparagingly of her and her mother, and why you prevented them from seeing my uncle?'

'"Miss," indeed!' said Mrs. Hicks in a tone of extreme disdain; 'I should think it beneath me, ma'am, to talk of them kind of people. Nobody knows nothing of 'em, and I am of opinion they are no great things.'

'But if you know nothing of them,' said Jessie, 'how can you form any opinion of them?'

'Wasn't they supported by master, ma'am, in a most unbecoming way?'

'I suppose that was your master's affair, Mrs. Hicks,' said Pynsent, for the first time waxing warm; 'and I wish you to know that there are such things as actions for slander. I have been once or twice to see Mrs. Eveleigh professionally, and some few other of my uncle's poor patients in that locality, and I have had some hints that not only Mrs. and Miss Eveleigh's names, but also that of my uncle, have been disrespectfully mentioned, and that in quarters where you are well known. I have no doubt that your attachment for my uncle will lead you to contradict all reports to his discredit; and if you have no opportunity of doing so, I shall certainly employ legal means to discover the real authors of the slander.'

'I am sure I knows nothing about it,' said Mrs. Hicks, 'and never wishes to see either of them females any more.'

'Very probably not; still you may see the friends you have in the neighbourhood, and simply give them to understand there can be no foundation for the reports concerning my uncle and Mrs. and Miss Eveleigh. You understand, Mrs. Hicks?'

'Certainly, sir,' was the reply of that worthy, who suddenly turned very pale.

'I think we have nothing more to say at present,' said Pynsent, 'therefore need not detain you.'

Mrs. Hicks made a very hasty exit, and not many days afterwards finally quitted the house. In the course of a few months she might have been seen presiding in a neat cook-shop, of which she was mistress, and the contents of which were doubtless feathers plucked from her good master's plumage.

The house in Duke Street was let furnished for a lodging-house, by the year, and Pynsent was to be the first lodger. He rented the parlours—in other words, his uncle's dining-room and library,—and a couple of good airy bedrooms at the top of the house.

The rent was thus secured to his uncle, and would prevent his feeling dependent during his residence at Fairfield. Thus was Pynsent suddenly launched upon the great London sea, to make a voyage after fame and fortune, which he had long desired to undertake, but had never before ventured upon.

The most painful thing connected with this general change in the family plans and prospects was the leaving Tiny behind, deprived of the only protector that she had in the world. The last interview was a very melancholy one. During her stay in London, Jessie had managed to add greatly to the happiness, not only of Tiny, whom she loved, but of Mrs. Eveleigh, whom she sincerely pitied. She had been to see them several times, and had taken good account of the straitened circumstances in which they were placed. She had by various manœuvres done her best to aid them. But her means were small, and it was impossible to draw any longer on her Uncle Timothy.

'You will write to us whenever you are in trouble or difficulty, my dear Tiny,' said Jessie, when she was in Duke Street the day before all were to leave London; 'and whenever you can get away, you will come to us.'

Tiny sat quietly in a shadowy corner of the library, her hair falling over a face as pale and delicate as a snowdrop. She did not answer, for she could not; but no trace of emotion was visible on her countenance,—she had been long accustomed to conceal her feelings.

'Come to the Grange, my dear, and bring your mother with you,' said Uncle James; 'we will put some colour into your cheeks.'

'Thank you, sir,' was the reply; 'but my mother could not well bear a long journey, and I cannot leave her.'

'Promise me, Tiny,' said Jessie, 'that you will not hesitate to send for Pynsent whenever you want advice or help.'

'I will! I will!' said Tiny.

Here Uncle James suddenly left the room.

'Tiny,' said Jessie, 'is there anything in the world I can do for you?'

'Nothing! nothing! I fear—I think—my poor, poor mother will not live long; and then—and then'— Here Tiny burst into tears.

Jessie felt that the words were but too true. 'And then, love, you can come to us for comfort, as well as to One who will never forsake you.'

'I could not burden you, Jessie, who have already much anxiety; but I will earn my bread and my poor mother's as long as she lives.'

'Tiny, is your mother very irritable? Forgive my asking, but there seems a something—a degree of unkindness—sometimes in her manner to you, that is unaccountable.'

'Oh!' said Tiny, hesitating, 'it is scarcely unkindness. She is very ill; she does not know what she says; and when we are without money, she sometimes hints that were it not for me she might have been differently circumstanced. But the next moment she repents, and begs me to forgive her hastiness. Another thing annoys her,—she cannot bear to see me paint. She says it is not only loss of time, but that it ruins my health; and, Jessie, to give up painting would be to give up half my life. If your brother Charles were here, he could understand me, but no one else can. It is really more than meat and drink to me. I suppose I inherit it from my father, who was, you know, an artist; but I cannot help it. If you would ask your brother to name me to any one who wants a drawing mistress, I might make money by my art. The little pupils that I had have left the neighbourhood, and I have now no recommendation, in my mother's eyes, to pursue the study. She says it half killed my father, and will kill me. I almost wish it would: it would be a happy death to die painting a fine picture.'

Jessie looked on the apparently passionless face of the young artist with astonishment. There was little outward symptom of the fire within: a bright ray from the deep eye, as she uttered the last sentence, was all the sign of enthusiasm that she betrayed.

'I wish I could make you happy, Tiny,' Jessie said.

'I try to be contented, and am thankful,' she replied; 'but my soul will soon be alone again, now you are going. But I must return to my mother, and I have not seen your uncle. Oh, Jessie! Jessie! I cannot bid him good-bye.'

'Only for a time, dear; and you know not yet what the Almighty may have in store for you. It will all be made clear to you if you trust in Him.'

'I do, Jessie; but my faith is young, and it sometimes wavers. I suppose it is hard for those to believe wholly who see little but the dark side of things. Shall we go to your uncle?'

This abrupt termination of the conversation led Jessie to perceive, what she had more than once done before, even in the childhood of the unfortunate Tiny, a degree of self-command that was very remarkable. No sooner did she appear to be about to give way to feeling of any kind, than she checked, by some strong mental effort, the inclination to do so, and became instantly calm and passionless as a statue. The reason of this Jessie guessed. Tiny had the artist temperament,—strong feel-

ings by nature, great talents, and acute sensibility; but Mrs. Eveleigh had none of this, and had neither understood nor encouraged it in her young charge. She was a matter-of-fact, everyday woman, who had discouraged all notions in Tiny that she considered likely to raise her mind above her station in life; and she looked upon painting, as a profession, as certain starvation. Thus Tiny had been compelled all her life to restrain every thought or feeling that rose beyond Mrs. Eveleigh's daily atmosphere, and to keep them concealed in her own breast.

It was dreadful to see them burst forth. Poor child! in vain was all her self-command and resolution when she went to bid farewell to her benefactor. Uncle Timothy also, who had acquired almost paternal feelings towards the child, was scarcely less moved.

He was sitting in an easy-chair, and looked very pale and feeble. The room was partially darkened, and a large green shade veiled his kind grey eyes. Pynsent was by his side when Jessie and Tiny entered the room, and Uncle James was vainly endeavouring to read the newspaper by the crevice in the half-opened shutter.

'Tiny is come to see you,' whispered Jessie, as she pushed a low seat close to her uncle, for the service of his young friend.

Tiny was soon seated, and her small hand clasped in the thin white fingers of the invalid. Placed as they both were in shadow, they looked like two pale spectres in an old picture. Tiny could not speak, but thoughts of future sorrow were busy in her mind. She felt as if her best friend was about to be removed from her for ever.

'If I do not come to you, you must come to me, Tiny,' said Uncle Timothy. 'Remember you belong to us.'

A low sob was the only answer. Jessie feared that her uncle might be excited by any demonstrations of emotion, and whispered to Tiny that perhaps she had better not remain. She rose, and, bending over her benefactor, murmured, 'I must go;' and then, after a moment's pause, 'Thank you, thank you for all!' Uncle Timothy put his arm round her, and kissed her tenderly, retaining her for a short time in his embrace; he then said, 'God bless you, my love!' and released her.

Tiny hurried out of the room, followed by Jessie, and went down into the library. Here she buried her face in the pillows of the sofa, and sobbed violently. Grief was stronger for once than her self-command. The sobs were followed by hysterics, and the hysterics were accompanied by slight convulsions, that greatly alarmed Jessie. She called Pynsent, who administered

the usual remedies, but did not succeed in quieting the convulsions for some time. It was most painful to see her wring her hands and turn her eyes upwards, as if supplicating help, and to hear her low sobs or groans, as if actual agony were tearing her heart. Pynsent spoke to her gently but firmly, and told her that she must gain the victory over herself. 'I will! I will!' she said, with an effort that brought the blood to her pale cheeks, and caused her to clench her teeth and hands. As if by a miracle, the convulsions ceased suddenly, and the slight form and the pale young face became almost rigid.

'I am sorry—forgive me!' were the first words; and there was no longer any visible emotion in the countenance.

'Speak to her kindly,—make her cry,' he whispered to Jessie.

Jessie put her arms round her, kissed her, and let her own warm tears fall on her face.

'Dearest Tiny! dear child!' she said, 'Uncle Timothy is better; God will spare him to us. I will write to you, and Pynsent will go and see you frequently; will you not, Pynsent?'

'If Tiny will let me,' said Pynsent, taking the poor child's hand and pressing it affectionately. 'You and your mother must look upon me as your uncle now, Tiny; you have no idea how respectable and old I look in the wig.'

The tenderness of Jessie and the good-will of Pynsent produced the desired effect. Tiny wept long in her friend's arms, who, understanding her nature well, did not try to comfort her. Pynsent left them until he thought Tiny must have recovered, and then returned with a glass of wine, which he insisted on her drinking.

'You must come and see me, Tiny,' he said, 'when I am housekeeper, and report to Jessie how I behave myself. And now, if you really must return home to-day, perhaps you had better let me escort you. Is not London making me gallant already? My smart new hansom is not ready yet, and—and—we have put down our carriage; so you must take part in a cab for this once.'

Tiny and he departed, and he did not leave her until he had placed her safely under Mrs. Eveleigh's protection.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

'How they so softly rest,
All, all the holy dead,
Unto whose dwelling-place
Now doth my soul draw near!
How they so softly rest,
All in their silent graves,
Deep to corruption
Slowly down-sinking.'

TRANSLATED FROM KLOPSTOCK.

A FEW months after Pynsent's installation into all the honours and solitariness of bachelorhood, he might have been seen, after a hard day's work, reposing at his ease in his uncle's arm-chair. He is looking very thoughtful, and, for him, sentimental. Still his professional prospects are decidedly favourable. The greater portion of his uncle's regular patients have quietly transferred themselves to his care, and do not seem to be conscious of having made a change for the worse. It is not to be supposed that he has stepped at once into his uncle's profession; but the name of Barnard being famous, and Duke Street still besieged with applications for advice, Pynsent naturally becomes more readily known than most men making a start in the London world.

But on this particular evening Pynsent feels lonely. Although he likes his profession, he does not like visiting, or care overmuch for play-going or sight-seeing; so he stays at home, and wonders *why* he feels so solitary. He has just received good accounts from Fairfield. All are getting on comfortably there, and Uncle Timothy is gaining health, though not, as yet, eyesight. As he has some portion of strength of mind and character, he takes himself to task thus:—

'And am I, Pynsent Burton, going to make a fool of myself at thirty-five years of age, when I was able to conquer my inclinations at twenty-five? I was heartily proud of my victory over the universal passion then, and felt sure that, once gained, I should never need to fight the battle again. And now I cannot go to visit a poor invalid mother, and watch the virtuous exertions and tender beauty of her child, without falling in love! Tush! I hate the vulgar term! And she only seventeen! And I have had her in my arms when I was a man and she almost an infant. It is too absurd. And yet I cannot look upon her without monstrous and ridiculous emotion. I never saw such endurance, talent, and loveliness united in a human being; she is as good and patient as Jessie, with

the addition of a grace that is absolutely divine. Bah! I am getting worse than sentimental. A child! a mere child! this morning, when she asked me, with that sad voice and sadder face, whether there were any hope, and seemed to hang upon my answer as if her life were in my power, I had almost asked her to be my wife. I, a poor surgeon, struggling for my uncle, without a profession or a penny of my own; and she, a girl whose very birth seems uncertain, for I am persuaded she cannot be Mrs. Eveleigh's daughter. I suppose I have some of that cursed family pride in me after all, for I could not marry a girl of doubtful birth. Jessie always said I was proud, and so, it seems, I am. Still Tiny, with her talents, dignity, and grace, might become a coronet. And I, a poor surgeon, hesitate to marry her! What strange anomalies we are! But I cannot marry any one, so why should I debate the point? When poor Mrs. Eveleigh is gone, Tiny must go to Fairfield, and they will take care of her there,—though I doubt whether her pride would allow her to be dependent on any one. There it is again! Pride! pride! turn where one will. Alas! poor human nature!'

It is impossible to say where Pynsent's soliloquy might have taken him next, but it was suddenly interrupted by the bursting open of the door and the rushing in of a tall young man.

'Charles!'

'Pynsent!'

'My dear fellow!'

'My dear brother!'

Tiny, pride, marriage, and everything else was forgotten. Charles had returned, after five or six years of absence, and it was no wonder that there was no need of further soliloquy.

Charles, at five-and-twenty, is no longer the pale, timid boy we remember him. Pale, to be sure, he is still, but firm and manly. More than ever does his countenance bear the stamp of toil and intellect. The hard study of five years is clearly seen in his thin cheeks, and bright but somewhat hollow eyes, and in the early commencement of those straight lines of thought between the eyebrows and in the forehead. The slight lameness is still perceptible, that sad legacy of the fever; but scarcely could any one who loved him wish it away, it makes him seem so much more gentle and sensitive than any one else. But his heart is resolved and bold enough. As a soldier for his country, so would he battle for the noble profession he has chosen. A historical painter! Is there any *more* noble? To put upon canvas for immortality the actions of the great and good, the heroic deeds of history, or the divine conceptions

of the poet? Such is the work Charles Burton has to do, and he is doing it with all his might.

'I have already a reputation abroad,' he said, when an hour had been passed in receiving details of home and family history, and his own plans were brought forward by his brother, 'and I will soon earn one at home. I have paintings now with me that must, without injustice, demand a place in the Royal Academy. I was offered a hundred and fifty guineas in Italy for one, but I could not sacrifice the hope of an English reputation for base gold.'

'My dear fellow, you will find that metal very useful by and by,' said Pynsent. 'You will have fairly to support yourself now by your profession, and must try to look upon things in a business point of view.'

'I have patrons amongst the most noble of our countrymen whom I met in Italy, and who have promised to stand by me whilst I pursue the branch of art I have chosen.'

'Don't trust to patrons, my dear fellow. We must stand by ourselves in this world, as we are sure to fall by ourselves. Success makes the man. Few patrons will stick to you unless you succeed.'

'Well,' said Charles modestly, 'I hope I have self-reliance enough to go my way without their aid, and rather than turn aside from the one great object of my life, I will starve.'

'It would not take much to starve you, to judge by your present condition. But we can have bread and cheese together for the present, and there is a capital room vacant at the top of the house for a studio, the identical one you had before you went abroad, with a small bedroom next-door; but I think you had better run down into the country before you set to work again.'

'Not until after the Royal Academy opens, and I know the fate of my pictures. We do not work fourteen hours a-day, study the anatomy of the human frame like a doctor, live amongst the masterpieces of Italian and Dutch art for five or six years, and read like a student at college, to return home and revel in the country. Painting has been, and is, life to me. And Tiny,—where and how is she? Does she show all the love of art she used to show?'

Pynsent was not given to blushing, yet he actually blushed at this sudden mention of a name that had of late fixed itself in his mind, in spite of his efforts to keep it out.

'She is much as she was,' he said, 'only seventeen or eighteen instead of twelve.'

'Do you know I have been longing to see her for various

reasons: in the first place, for her own sake, and in the second for painting's sake. She must have the very face for a picture I am about to paint.'

'You may see her whenever you like, doubtless; but, with a dying mother, and poverty pressing hard, she is not in a likely condition to sit for a picture.'

Charles's kind heart soon forgot his painting in sympathy with the child he loved. He questioned his brother concerning her, but was answered with so much taciturnity that he resolved to judge for himself as soon as possible.

And, whilst the night wears away happily in Duke Street, what is the said Tiny about? Let us proceed to Peckham and see.

She has just shaken up the pillows of poor Mrs. Eveleigh's arm-chair, and made her as comfortable as she can for the evening hours. She has swept up the hearth and trimmed the little fire, and, by drawing the curtains of the small window, has made the portrait-covered parlour look tolerably cheerful and warm. She has put a round table by Mrs. Eveleigh's side, and placed thereon some jelly and a few books, procured for them by the kindness of Pynsent, in addition to the work-box and work already disposed upon it. She has seated herself, and is preparing to sew a long seam of a shirt, whilst Mrs. Eveleigh languidly takes up the gussets of the same, and begins, as Hood says, 'to sew them on in a dream.'

'Mother,' says Tiny anxiously, 'pray do not work to-night. I can finish this shirt, and we have money enough to go on with for more than a week.'

'My dear child, we must depend on ourselves now that Mr. Barnard is gone.'

This had been the constant nervous reply of the poor invalid ever since Uncle Timothy's removal from London.

'But to-night, mother,—only to-night. You know it is my birthday, and I am eighteen. Give yourself a holiday for my sake, and I will read to you.'

'Eighteen! eighteen!' echoed Mrs. Eveleigh, dropping the work from her fingers. 'It is time now, whilst I have strength. My dear, I will not work to-night. You are eighteen! Do you love me, Tiny? Will you always love me? Will you never leave me whilst I live?'

'Love you, mother!—leave you! What strange questions! Of course I love you, and shall never leave you.'

'My child, have I acted by you as a mother, as you have always done by me as a daughter? God bless you for it!'

'You have been a tender mother to me always; I wish I had a

more loving nature, that I could have returned your tenderness better.'

'Will you always call me mother as long as I am in this world, and sometimes think of me as your mother when I am in another?'

'How can I do otherwise?'

'Because you are not my daughter,—not my own, own child.'

'Not your daughter! then who am I? what am I?'

These questions, now uttered for the first time, Tiny had often longed to propose before.

'I will tell you, my child; but go first of all to that drawer in the bureau, the key of which I have always kept, and bring me all that it contains.'

Tiny did as she was bid, and returned with her arms filled with articles of wearing apparel, and an old pocket-book in her hands.

'Now sit there, at my feet,' said Mrs. Eveleigh, 'your hand in mine, your head against my knees, that I may still fancy you my own dear child.'

Tiny placed herself, with beating heart, upon the seat indicated, and listened to the sad history of her birth.

When Mrs. Eveleigh told her all that she had herself been told of her mother's beauty of person and gentle manners, Tiny wept; and when she described her misery and death, she covered her face with both hands, leaned her head upon her knees, and sobbed aloud. When the clothes, sole relics of that unhappy mother, were given into her keeping, she dared not raise her eyes to look upon them. Finally the old pocket-book was opened, and her mother's rings, purse, and the fragment of a letter, with its signature, 'Sophia,' drawn forth.

'Give me your left hand, poor child,' said Mrs. Eveleigh, with a hoarse voice. 'This cameo was on the wedding-finger, and I will put it upon yours; God grant that it help to find your friends. This wedding-ring was round her neck, which makes me hope she was married to your father; let me fasten it around your neck, that so you may always have hope of the same, as I have.'

Feebly the weak, sad sufferer uplifted the long hair of the unfortunate girl, to hang around her neck the ring, which hope transformed into a sign of union. Convulsively was it grasped by her, and pressed to her lips. Then came the fair Italian characters of the writing on the piece of paper, which was supposed to have been written and torn again by her mother, and which proved that mother to have been a person of education. All this Tiny endured with bursting heart, but without uttering a word.

When it was over, Mrs. Eveleigh sank back in her chair exhausted. There was a long silence, unbroken except by Tiny's continued low sobbings. At last, with the fretful selfishness of illness, Mrs. Eveleigh said,—

'Ah, I feared it would be so! You do not love me, you never loved me. But I am very faint; it has been too much for me, Tiny.'

Tiny rose quickly. 'Mother, my dear mother, forgive me. It was so strange, so wonderful! Two mothers, yet no mother! No one belonging to me! It is so horrible, so horrible!'

Tiny fell into Mrs. Eveleigh's arms and buried her head in her bosom. She was immediately pressed to a fond but feeble heart.

'God bless you, my love! You called me mother. God bless you!'

Mrs. Eveleigh fainted.

Tiny was compelled to rouse herself, and to forget the real lost mother in the anxiety she felt for the supposed one she was about to lose.

The exertion and excitement of the conversation had quite overcome Mrs. Eveleigh's small remaining strength, and it was some time before she came to herself. When she did so, it was only to feel obliged to lie down on a bed, from which she was to rise no more.

The following day Pynsent and Charles came. Pynsent showed his brother into the little parlour, whilst he tapped at the door of the common sitting-room, where Tiny was, surrounded by five little pupils. It was just twelve o'clock, and she despatched them at once. Pynsent went into the room, and heard Tiny's unsatisfactory account of the invalid. He was much struck with the increased paleness of her own face, and the painful expression of her features.

'You are not well?' he said anxiously.

'Quite well, but I have been obliged to sit up the greater part of the night with my mother.'

A slight flush overspread the face as the word 'mother' was spoken. Pynsent felt again that he could have found it in his heart to ask her to be his wife. Probably there was more than usual interest in his kind eyes, for Tiny quickly said,—

'Perhaps you will be so good as to go up-stairs. I will run first and prepare my mother;' and therewith she left the room, returning speedily with the request that Pynsent would go to Mrs. Eveleigh.

'There is some one waiting for you in the parlour,' said Pynsent, as he went up-stairs.

It had been agreed between him and Charles that Tiny should

not be told who it was that awaited her. She had not time to inquire, and was frightened at the prospect of a stranger. She saw a tall, thin, gentlemanlike man standing with his back to the door, earnestly examining a painting which stood half-finished on the easel, by the window. It was the head of an old madman, who was in the habit of coming frequently to ask alms of Tiny, and who, in return for such trifles as she could bestow, had patiently sat to her for his picture. The portrait was wonderfully clever for a girl of eighteen,—bold and expressive. The dark countenance and darker background were relieved by the white hair and the bright fragment of a red scarf, twisted about the neck and shoulders.

Charles turned round as Tiny entered.

'It is capital, admirable! I could not have believed it!' he exclaimed enthusiastically, as he seized her hand.

She was so astonished, that she scarcely dared to look at this extraordinary visitor.

'Tiny, you are a genius!' he again exclaimed. 'Forgive me if I have frightened you.'

She looked up, and recognised her old friend. Extreme shyness and great happiness combined, prevented her speaking, but her hand remained in his.

He now looked at her for the first time. The child whose wonderful countenance had haunted him all his life, and had been produced and reproduced in so many of his best paintings, stood before him, a pale and lovely girl. In spite of the plain dark dress that she wore, the black stuff apron, the unembroidered collar, it was impossible to see any one more lovely in that peculiar kind of spiritual beauty that he the most admired.

'Forgive my abruptness, dear Tiny,' he said again, 'but that painting is so clever, that I could not help expressing my surprise. But I ought to have remembered that you were in trouble. How is your mother?'

'Worse, I fear,' said Tiny, commanding her feelings; 'she was very ill last night.' And then the thought that she stood before her best-beloved friend, Charles Burton, already worse than an orphan, rushed into her mind, and she was so overcome that she turned to leave the room.

'No!' said Charles, gently but firmly detaining her; 'you require consolation and friendship more than solitude. We have been great friends for many years, and have, I hope, much in common. We love the same art, and, if I may judge from this, the same poet; we have the same dear friends, and are at home in the same scenes: therefore we have much to talk of.'

As he spoke he took up a volume of Shakespeare, which lay half-open on the easel, where it had lain for many days, like the picture, untouched.

'You thought that old man's head would make a fine King Lear, and you were right,' he said, wishing to turn the current of her thoughts; the Shakespeare was open at the tragedy of *King Lear*.

Tiny's eyes brightened, and a rare gleam of pleasure shot from them. Her ideal was understood and appreciated by him for whose sole approval she cared. She was understood,—she was not quite unworthy of her friend.

'We will study these together, Tiny,' said Charles, pointing first to the picture, then to the tragedy; 'it will be hard if we do not make something of them between us. I might give you some hints on the actual laborious part of painting, and you might help me in the ideal.'

'I!' exclaimed Tiny, with an incredulous smile.

Here Pynsent entered.

'I must speak a moment with you, Miss Eveleigh,' he said.

He generally called her Miss Eveleigh, unless some sudden feeling prompted the more friendly term.

She followed Pynsent out of the room into the little schoolroom.

'I shall send a respectable nurse to help you,' he said. 'I will try to see your mother again this evening, but the nurse shall be sent at once.'

Tiny felt what Pynsent had not the courage to say, that Mrs. Eveleigh's death was shortly to be expected.

'Tell me the worst,' she said calmly.

'I fear she cannot be with you many weeks.'

'Weeks! thank God! I dreaded days or even hours.' It was like a reprieve to a condemned criminal: she was not to lose her only sure stay quite so soon; she was not to be alone in the world perhaps for weeks instead of days.

Mrs. Eveleigh's bell rang.

'Wish your brother good-bye for me, if you please; and thank you very, very much,' she said, as she gave her hand to Pynsent, and ran up-stairs.

In the course of the day a kind nurse arrived. Pynsent came, according to promise, in the evening, and continued his visits daily afterwards, and sometimes twice a-day, when he could spare time. Charles frequently accompanied him, and saw Tiny during his brother's brief visits to the invalid.

It was astonishing how Mrs. Eveleigh lingered; as if the lamp of life were replenished, drop by drop, by some invisible hand, it

would not go out; perhaps the quiet, patient, waiting spirit tarried to the very last for Tiny's sake. Having disburdened itself of its one secret, it was calm as the soul of a sleeping infant; all that Tiny did or said was received with glances of the ineffable affection of a mother; and no daughter could more tenderly perform every duty, than Tiny performed hers.

'I leave you to the Saviour in whom I trust, and to whom I go,' were amongst the last words that the dying woman said to her adopted child.

CHAPTER XXXV.

'My early friends, friends of my evil day;
Friends in my mirth, friends in my misery too;
Friends given by God, in mercy and in love;
My counsellors, my comforters, my guides;
My joy in grief, my second grief in joy;
Companions of my young desires; in doubt
My oracles, my wings in high pursuit.'—POLLOK.

ALL was over! Tiny, Pynsent, Charles, and the nurse had followed poor Mrs. Eveleigh to her last resting-place.

Tiny was alone in the little parlour,—how truly alone! the brothers had returned home, thinking it best not to intrude upon her grief, and the nurse had been dismissed. Of all Tiny's sad life, this moment was the saddest. She had never known, until then, what her gentle companion had been to her,—how loving and tender, how considerate, how motherly!

Poor Tiny! two vague shadows haunted her,—those of her supposed and real mother,—the former a meek, patient shadow, working in that arm-chair, or dying on the bed up-stairs, looking ever to her for support and comfort; the other a misty but beautiful form, clothed in that large Indian shawl, and with an antique ring on her finger, and the wedding-ring close to her heart,—what was she? who was she?

Again Tiny brought forth the clothes she had worn, and spread them out before her. They were all of good material, and ladylike in form and colour. When she had examined and re-examined every article, she sat down by the table on which they were spread, and wept. As she leaned her elbow on the table, she pushed down an open letter which was on it; she took the letter in her hands, and read it again and again. Kind, tender, affectionate, religious words covered the paper; they were written by Jessie,—just such words as we might have expected her to write

on such an occasion. The letter concluded with a hearty and earnest invitation to Fairfield; an entreaty that the solitary gir should come "home"—so it was expressed—as soon as the melancholy ceremony of the interment was over.

'Home! home!' echoed Tiny involuntarily; 'there is no home for me but this lonely house, and this I must give up to another in September; till then it must be paid for, and till then I have a shelter, and can earn a subsistence. No! no! sweet, pure Jessie! I cannot go to Fairfield with this secret on my conscience; I could not make my home with those who do not think me what I am. I was at least respectable as the child of the poor artist and his wife; I am now—God alone knows what I am, who I am. Was there ever any human being so desolate? Not a relative in the world; no claim on anything but charity. I will write and refuse at once.'

The letter was written, blotted with the writer's tears. Distinctly and decidedly did she refuse to go to Fairfield, and become another burden on one already so much burdened as was Jessie.

She said she could support herself for six months where she was, after which period she might find a situation in a private family; or else, if not sufficiently accomplished for that, obtain employment as a needlewoman in some respectable establishment. She did not say that during the next six months she would paint day and night, in the hope of eventually living by her art, although this plan was at the bottom of all the others.

She folded her letter, and took it herself to the post. When she returned, she found Pynsent awaiting her: he had driven Charles home, visited some patients, and come back to comfort and advise the desolate girl.

She had not expected visitors, therefore had left the room strewn with her poor mother's clothes. Pynsent did not seem to be aware of this, as he was sitting, lost in thought, by the fire. He started when she entered, and, as if completing what he had been saying to himself, exclaimed,—

'Yes, Tiny, you must go at once to Fairfield.'

'I have just written to your sister to say that I cannot go,' she said, as she seated herself opposite him.

'Cannot go! why, you cannot remain here, in London, without a protector. My uncle is your guardian, and Jessie your true friend, therefore to them you must go at once.'

'I have refused, thank you. I shall begin my little school again to-morrow, and finish the work we have still in the house. I fear the rent must be paid till September, so I will give notice on quarter-day, which will soon be here. You see I have a

house and home for many months, and I think I can live, and earn money enough to pay the rent in that time.'

'You cannot live here alone,—impossible!'

'I have some idea that the nurse you sent—Mrs. Good—will take one of the rooms, and she will be a protection for me. Besides, I should see *no* one but my little pupils and their parents.'

This was said with hesitation, because Tiny meant Pynsent to understand that she knew his visits must be discontinued; and he did understand it. Once more he felt ready to ask her to be his wife, but again habitual prudence prevailed. There is little doubt that he loved her, and looked forward to the possibility of marrying her at some indefinite period. Now his object was to get her safe at Fairfield.

'And why are you resolved not to go to Fairfield?' he asked. 'I shall write to Jessie, to both my uncles, and to Captain Burford, and get them all to back me.'

'It would not do,' she replied, with a sad smile. 'I have been a burden too long, and must now begin to support myself. Were I to go first to happy Fairfield, it would be worse for me afterwards.'

Pynsent acknowledged the truth of what she said.

'I dare not stay longer now,' he said, 'but I must try you again to-morrow on the same subject. I have an appointment at six, and it is now five.'

'One moment!' said Tiny, with tears streaming down her cheeks.

She went to a bookshelf, and took down a well-bound book, together with a small, rather choice chimney ornament that had been placed upon it.

'My poor mother desired me to ask you to keep these in remembrance of her. It is a sad return'—

Tiny could say no more; the thought of her departed friend overcame her.

Pynsent hastily took the offerings, pressed Tiny's hands, and hurried to his carriage to hide his own feelings.

'May God bless you!' were Tiny's murmured words, as she heard him drive away.

He went at once to Charles, and begged him to get into the first omnibus, go to Peckham, and see whether he could make anything of Tiny.

'Use all your influence to get her home,' he said. 'At any risk she must not be left alone.'

It was between seven and eight when Charles reached Tiny. He found her at work, still surrounded by her unknown mother's

clothes, which she had folded up and placed near her. She knew that to carry out her plan she must labour, and the sometime neglected work-box and fine linen wristbands had been brought forth. True, she could not do much for tears.

Something more than a start of surprise greeted Charles when he entered the room. The hands trembled more even than they had done over the work, and the eyes shot a wonderful gleam of pleasure through the tears.

'Working, Tiny, already! this must not be!' said Charles, taking the wristband and needle from her hands, and seating himself beside her,—so different from Pynsent, who always placed himself at a distance. 'You must give up this wearing occupation, and go to Fairfield.'

'I cannot go to Fairfield,' she said, dropping her hands languidly on her knees, and hanging her head to hide the tears.

'Why have you such a dislike to Fairfield?' asked Charles heedlessly.

'Dislike! Oh, unkind word!' said Tiny.

'I did not mean it, dear Tiny, but I partly understand you: you will not go home, and you must not, shall not, remain here. Tiny, there is one alternative. If I could at such a time,—if I dared to hope that you would consent,—I would ask you to share and aid the fortunes of one who has nothing, like yourself, but his good right arm to make his way with. We have everything in common: we love the same glorious art; we have the same ambition, hopes, thoughts, purposes,—shall we have—have wet—he same love?'

Poor Tiny! Lower and lower drooped the head, faster and faster flowed the tears.

'Only one word, one look, to say that the childish affection you showed me years ago, and all the tender care and kindness it drew with it, is not quite vanished with childhood,' said Charles, gently stroking the hair of the drooping head.

Tiny looked up, made her usual effort at self-command, and spoke hurriedly but audibly. 'What my feelings were years ago they have been and still are. I do not care for any one in this world as I care for you. I could work for you, live for you, die for you, but you must not speak to me again as you have just spoken.'

'It is only brotherly love then, as I feared, dear Tiny.'

'No, no! ah, no! I wish it were. To know that—that you feel what you say you feel, is too great happiness.'

Tiny hid her face in her hands, but Charles drew the hands away, and looked earnestly into the face.

'Dear Tiny, we love one another,' he said; 'we are one in

heart and soul: let us thank God for it. This being the case, no human power shall divide us; we will share the good and evil of this life, whatever betide. I will work, and you shall help me, and so, as husband and wife, we will be happy, and bring to perfection the talents given us, which first brought our souls so close together.'

'It cannot be, it cannot be,' murmured Tiny.

'I must know why it cannot be,' said Charles.

Tiny withdrew her hands from Charles, and again covered her face with them, as she said distinctly, but with considerable effort,—

'Because I am not what you think me,—that is poor and desolate enough,—but I am poorer and more desolate still. Mrs. Eveleigh was not my mother; your uncle took me to save me from the workhouse, and brought me up for charity. I am an outcast from my kindred, if I have any,—a nameless, deserted orphan.'

'Then, Tiny,' said Charles solemnly, again tenderly pressing the drooping head with his hand, as if in assurance of love and protection, but refraining from withdrawing the shame-concealing hands from the burning face,—'then, dearest Tiny, then, with God's blessing, we will give you kindred, and an honest, honourable name, which we will strive together to make more honourable still. Parents I cannot give you, for, like you in that as in all else, I am an orphan; but brothers and sisters shall be yours, and, better still, "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother," who will work for and with you, and strive to make you forget that you ever felt, even for a moment, alone in the world.'

'Charles!' said Tiny, letting fall her hands, and looking suddenly into his face with an expression of such astonishment, love, and gratitude as it is well to see beam from a human countenance, because it approaches it to the divine.

She could speak no other word, and none was needed. Charles allowed the sobs and tears that followed to have way before he broke the silence, and then he gently led her to talk of him rather than of herself, leaving it to time to unfold to him the little she knew of herself.

But before he left her, he had heard it all; by fragments, it is true, but she could not be happy until he knew what she had been told. He made no comments, further than to assure her, by looks more than words, that her revelations made no change in him; his resolution had been taken and his plans formed when Mrs. Eveleigh died, and he was not a character to alter them.

The beautiful, the gifted, and the good were all in all to him, as to many other enthusiastic and youthful hearts; and prudent thoughts of the future, and its possible weight of cares and trials, were rarely in his mind. Tiny was of the same nature, but had had more foresight and forethought instilled into her by circumstances, and was therefore less certain of the propriety of his arguments than he was himself, although quite carried away by them whilst he was near her.

They had faith in themselves, in each other, and in the art they loved; and life seemed to each of them only given to work out grand designs, and to conduce to the good and happiness of mankind.

Tiny suddenly saw a new world, and a glorious one, opened before her, too large and splendid to admit of counting costs, as in her working-day, circumscribed one; let us not wonder, then, if for a time she forgot all else but faith in the enthusiast before her and hope in the future.

'My picture is received into the Academy,' said Charles; 'to-morrow is the opening day. I feel that the labour and study I have bestowed on it must make it a picture of note, if there is justice in the world; and I also know that I can do still better. I have put a price of two hundred and fifty guineas upon it, for I am sure it is worth it, even though it be the first I have exhibited in my own country. To-morrow, Tiny, I will fetch you, and take you to the Academy; I am unknown, and we can watch together the fate of the picture, and our own; for if it sell, before a week is over our heads you shall be mine, and we will paint the next together.'

It was in vain for Tiny to shake her head, and hint at the possibility of disappointment, and the impossibility of such haste. Charles was positive; and when they parted, pledged to one another for life or death, his last words were, 'You shall not be lonely long.'

It was with considerable anxiety that Pynsent awaited the return of Charles. He sat by the fire with a deep medical treatise before him, trying to fix his attention upon it, but in vain. He had just put by his pencil and papers, having quite failed in his endeavours to make clear notes of a case he had been attending. He perpetually saw the words, 'What can Charles be about?' both on the blank and printed paper, and tormented himself by thinking how improper it was that he and Tiny should be so long alone together. Everything must have an end, and so had his half jealous, half prudential torments, for the last omnibus brought Charles.

'What is the matter? what has kept you?' exclaimed Pynsent, with unusual animation.

'Sit down, my dear fellow, and I will tell you all,' replied Charles, drawing an arm-chair to the fire.

The 'all,' when told, was a thunderbolt. Whilst relating his engagement and intended marriage, Tiny's history, and, in short, all that he had said and done during the evening, Charles was too much engrossed in his own happiness to look at his brother.

Pynsent meanwhile experienced many conflicting feelings. Charles had effected in an hour what his prudence had forbidden him to do through long, long years. Would he be the better or the worse for it? Such sentences as the following were frequently ejaculated mentally, as the history proceeded:—

'Thank God, I never proposed for her! What a fool I was, and am! Saved from being made greater, perhaps, by Charles's precipitancy. Now I can partly understand what Jessie has had to go through. Both supplanted by our youngers. Paint together!—starve together, most likely. Ay, what is to become of her unless she marries? and what is to become of both if they marry? Two hundred and fifty guineas will support them for a year and a half, and they will have another picture by next year worth five hundred. I wish they may get it! He has laid all his plans as if he had a thousand a-year,—he, dependent on his uncles till very lately. He says nothing about the thousand pounds from the estate. We are not a selfish race, thank God! Poor boy! how excited he looks! I suppose they have always loved one another. Hang this love! it makes men idiots, and women babies. I'll have no more of it, at all events. There shall be one *outwardly* sensible member of the Burtons, however confoundedly foolish he may be inwardly! I have never betrayed myself, thanks to my good fortune. And these rash youngsters are all to be happy, whilst Jessie and I are to labour for them! Well! we only play the part of parents, and do our duty. Sweet Tiny! she is too lovely a creature to be cast upon the world; you are right there, sir. Ah! not Mrs. Eveleigh's daughter? I suspected that. Well, I could never have married any one, if I had been a greater fool than I am, whose parents I did not know to be respectable; so Providence has ordered well for me. But what advice am I to give in this case?'

The last thought was suggested by Charles's winding up with the words,—

'And now, old fellow, what do you say to it all?'

'Say that you are a lucky dog if you get Tiny and all that you expect besides,' was the calm reply.

'I forgot to say that I feel convinced that Tiny must be the child of talented, if not of distinguished parents,' said Charles; 'and I have no doubt of a marriage concealed from peculiar motives.'

'Humph!' ejaculated Pynsent.

'Pynsent, I should like to shake you!' said Charles.

'You would scarcely shake sympathy out of me, I am so sleepy; I am not sure that I haven't been asleep this half-hour. Now, let us both go to bed and dream upon it. We shall be able to discuss the matter better to-morrow morning, after we have had the aid of visitations in dreams. If you are hungry, ring for something to eat; but I suppose lovers don't feel those vulgar cravings. Good-night, old chap! There's a salutation for an artist and innamorato!'

Pynsent went to bed, but not to sleep. He wrote at once to Jessie, for the advice he did not feel able to give himself. Then he reproached himself for want of brotherly feeling. 'I was jealous, and could not wish him joy. I vow, love, like money, is the root of all evil.' And, in order to make up for his omissions, he stalked up to Charles's attic in his dressing-gown, and apostrophized him with,—

'I say, Charles, you must let me wish you joy, whether you get it or no. Remember, I am no lover myself, so don't understand the rhapsodies.'

'Thank you, Pynsent; I knew you did not feel as cold as you seemed about this great event of my life, but you threw a sad damp upon it.'

'Well, let it dry now, Charley, and be sure that you have a brother who will do his best to make you happy. Shake hands once more. God bless you—you—and—and—Tiny!'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

'Monmouth's Foot, though deserted, made a gallant stand. The Life Guards attacked them on the right, the Blues on the left; the Somersetshire clowns, with their scythes and the butt-ends of their muskets, faced the Royal Horse like old soldiers. . . . The Dissenting preachers who had taken arms against Popery, and some of whom had probably fought in the great Civil War, prayed and preached in red coats and huge jack-boots, with swords by their sides. . . . Sedgemoor fight was the last, deserving the name of battle, that has been fought on English ground.'—MACAULAY.

THE following morning Charles went for Tiny, according to his promise, and took her to the Royal Academy. It was early, and there were as yet few visitors. It was his pleasure that his companion should not be told which was his picture, as he wished to discover whether it would strike her fancy or not. They accordingly walked leisurely from picture to picture with beating hearts, he fearing lest his should not attract her notice, and she dreading to pass it by unremarked, or to make some disparaging observation upon it. He endeavoured to gain her opinion of the various paintings, by commenting freely upon them himself, but he could only discover those she did not admire from her silence. Her taste was perfect; and as they passed on, Charles trembled more and more. It was not necessary to point out to her the seemingly living and breathing animals of Landseer, as they stood before her free and perfect, as if Nature herself had painted them,—neither the grand historical portraiture of Maclise,—nor the calm, subdued colouring of Herbert,—nor the faithful, Cuyp-like, sunny animals of Cooper, united with the fresh and beautiful landscapes of his coadjutor, Lee,—nor the Wilkie-like, natural Websters,—nor the inimitable Stanfields,—nor those of a hundred others, whose names and paintings live in every heart that has a throb to bestow on the divine art they have followed and lived for. Tiny knew each of these by intuition, and it was a treat to Charles to see her deep, sad eyes lighten with pleasure, and to hear her quiet expressions of admiration as she stood before them. So great was her love for her art, that she forgot Charles's picture for the moment, when commenting with the artist's taste and knowledge upon the salient points in those of his fellow-labourers. It was when she came to some striking piece, the peculiar style or colouring of which she did not know, executed by some artist as yet only ascending the ladder of fame, that she paused anxiously, and tried to read in the eyes of her friend whether it were *the* picture or not. 'I must have passed it by unnoticed,'

she said to herself, as her heart seemed to fail her. But Charles's eyes were still bright.

'This is it! I am sure this is it!' she exclaimed, as she suddenly stopped before a pleasant, green, fresh landscape, with cattle and figures. Charles could almost have echoed her words, for it was such a scene as he had often sketched himself near his uncle's house in Somersetshire.

'No,' he said, 'that is not it; but I could almost fancy I grouped those cows.'

More and more minutely does she now examine every picture, and more anxiously does she glance into Charles's face.

'That is a beautiful group,' she says, as she stops before a picture of a cottage with children at play in the foreground, and half fancies it is what Charles would paint; but there is no assenting smile in his face. 'Ah! that is true nature itself!' she says. 'Is it a Cooper? No, it is new to me.' Again she guesses, but apparently wrong, as they pause before a clever sketch of cattle. She somehow fancies that Charles's picture must be a Somersetshire sketch, and half expects to see Fairfield itself, or the river and meadows he loved so well.

'Suppose it should be this?' her heart suggests, as they face a large frame, in front of which a considerable group is assembled.

They are obliged to pause awhile before they can obtain a sight of the picture, and Tiny seats herself for a few moments on one of the benches opposite, and listens to the comments of the spectators.

'That is a very fine painting,' exclaims one elderly gentleman, with the air of a connoisseur. 'I scarcely know the hand, but it is very clever.'

'Ah,' says a young man by his side, 'I don't know; a pretty child, certainly,'—here he turns over the leaves of his catalogue,—'but not otherwise remarkable. It has not even the artist's name. It is signed "Alpha,"—some beginner, probably.'

'What is this?' whispers a lady to a friend who holds a catalogue. 'It must be something remarkable, there are so many people round it.'

'It is called "Sedgemoor after the Fight," and the motto is "All for glory,"' is the reply. 'I always admire those dark pictures with the moon just rising in the distance.'

'Nothing could be finer than that prostrate dying peasant; or the Puritan who is reading to him, and is himself wounded,' says a gentleman who has been attentively considering the picture for some time without speaking.

'Except the child,' rejoins a friend; 'she must be a portrait.

Was there ever anything truer, and yet more spiritual, than the face and attitude?'

'Rather affected, I think,' drawls a dandy, looking through his eyeglass. 'Who ever saw a child kneeling by the side of a peasant, and that peasant with a scythe near him, killed in battle?'

'But it is "After the Fight," and the child and dog have come to seek for the dead. The plain is covered with slain. There are soldiers, peasants, Puritans, and horses everywhere. It is Sedgemoor Field, and very clever too.'

'Upon my soul, that is a promising picture,' exclaims a voice that makes Tiny start. She looks at the speaker.

'Mr. Michelson,' whispers Charles. 'Do not let him recognise us.'

'That child!' continues Mr. Michelson,—for he it is; 'I have seen the original. Who can it be, and where have I seen the face?'

'Do you not think the moonlight too strong upon the child, and the men too much in shadow?' suggests one of the three gentlemen who accompany Mr. Michelson, and who all appear either artists or connoisseurs.

'That is a fine idea,' remarks another of the two. 'The dog is protecting both father and child,—one paw on her, the other on him, whilst his eye is on the raven hovering near.'

'There is a little imitation of Landseer in the dog,' says another.

'Dog!' interrupts Mr. Michelson. 'Look at the child; I never saw anything so beautiful in my life as her face. And then the portrait! I must know who the artist is!'

Mr. Michelson moved away towards another quartette of critics who were standing near.

'That painter's fortune is made!' muttered one of the gentlemen he left. 'Michelson doesn't praise for nothing.'

'Now we can get a sight of the picture,' whispered Tiny, half-withdrawing the thick black veil that covered her face.

Charles walked towards the painting, and, as Tiny leaned on him, she thought she felt his arm tremble.

The subject of the picture was, as the bystanders have already said, a battle-field by moonlight. The prominent characters were a dying peasant, with a Puritan divine reading the Bible to him, and a child kneeling by his side, clasping his hand in hers, and raising her eyes to heaven. A large sheep-dog seemed to be watching both the living and the dead, and keeping at bay some ravens hovering above. The peasant had fallen fighting for the unfortunate Duke of Monmouth, and the distant field—or Sedge-

moor—was covered with the slain. The picture was remarkable for its strong light and shade, and for an evident, and, at that time, original attempt to throw off some of the mere tricks or conventionalities of art. It was apparently the work of a young artist of considerable genius and over-much boldness; but the merits far exceeded the defects. The broad, uninteresting moor was rendered poetic by the faint gleams of moonlight that fell across it, and by the power of the artist in giving distance, and yet melting that distance into the dark evening sky. The expression of the child's face, as she held her dead father's hand to her breast, and seemed to be entreating Heaven to restore him to life, was touchingly beautiful. The moonlight on the long hair, pale unearthly face, and clasped hands, brought out the figure as if it was actually kneeling before you; whilst the shadow of the dog threw the form of the peasant and Puritan into gloom, and gave a night-effect to the whole foreground, relieved by the gleams of moonlight on the child.

You and I, reader, have seen that child before, and so have Charles and Tiny, though the latter does not recognise her. She stands before her own portrait, gazing on it as if in a dream of wonder, doubt, and hopeful admiration. She has so often, in their childish days, heard Charles talk of the fatal Sedgemoor fight, and the interest the moor, which he had often visited, had for him, that she almost fancies the painting is at last reached. How frequently and energetically had he endeavoured to describe to her the dreadful massacre of the Somersetshire peasantry, as they fought with their scythes, or other labouring utensils, for their 'King Monmouth,' as they chose to call him, and fought to the death, whilst he, their leader, had fled for life. How often had he praised his Puritan heroes, preaching and fighting for the religion they perished to preserve, and declared that a poem or a picture should immortalize the moral and spiritual courage of men who, however blindly misled, had died for a supposed king, and the preservation of a true faith. And here were the painting and poem united. The sturdy peasant with his bloody scythe by his side, and the stern Puritan breathing his last, apparently, in reading the Holy Book he had striven to keep open for the people, to one of the unlettered multitude, who passed away from earth in listening. Both true to the last; and here, in the kneeling child, was the poem. Filial affection had brought her over the bloody field, led by the instinct of the faithful shepherd's dog, to her peasant father's corpse,—one of the thousands of orphans made that day, by mistaken zeal and misplaced ambition. Sad but true poetry of life! This was a picture that Tiny would have wished him she loved to have painted. Was it his?

She looked into his face. His eyes were bent earnestly on her. They had been watching every varying expression of her countenance, and seemed, from the gleams of pleasure that lighted them, to be satisfied with what they had seen.

'Yours!' said Tiny under her breath.

'What of it?' asked Charles.

'Beautiful, very beautiful!' was the reply, whilst the black veil was hastily drawn down to conceal the tears that gathered in the eyes of the speaker.

'Mine! and you have been the invisible agent,' said Charles, pressing the arm he held within his. 'That was your portrait some ten years ago, sketched then, but worked into every imaginable form all these years. I am satisfied.'

He drew her gently through the crowded rooms. They did not pause to examine any other pictures. They scarcely spoke again, until, by means of a succession of omnibuses, they arrived at the quiet cottage at Peckham.

The following day Charles had the satisfaction of learning that his picture had been purchased by Mr. Michelson for the price affixed, £250. He had, moreover, the pleasure of finding, during the ensuing week, the cards of several celebrated painters on his table, as well as those of some of the liberal patrons of the art. His fame had begun, and he had now to labour to complete it.

Various characteristic letters arrived from home, commenting on the hasty marriage he had declared it his positive intention of making. Uncle James's contained a full approval, and a hint that if at any time he wanted a hundred pounds to help to keep house, he might apply to him as banker. 'Marry whilst you are young, my boy, and don't waste your valuable days in old-bachelorhood,' it said. 'I am only now beginning to live, at sixty-five, and had I been able to obtain the hand of your admirable aunt in early life, I should have lived at least thirty-five years.' Aunt Betsey, on the contrary, was highly wroth at the idea of a Burton's intermarrying with a poor artist's orphan, not remembering that her nephew was nothing but a poor artist himself. From Jessie there were two letters, one dictated by Uncle Timothy, and the other wholly her own. The former contained all that the dictator knew of Tiny's birth, and an entreaty that Charles would do nothing hastily; also a warm blessing on the pair, if they really decided upon roughing it together in the world. The latter, as was Jessie's custom, contained sound and prudent advice. In the first place, she begged Charles to wait until he could see his way clear, and to endeavour to induce Tiny to go to Fairfield, and stay there for some months. Much more she wrote, which those who know

her character will imagine, but which was quite thrown away upon Charles.

'Uncle James is a true, great-hearted man!' he exclaimed, as he gave his letter to Pynsent; 'but, thank God, I shall not want his help!'

'Humph!' was Pynsent's first word as he read. 'How can any old dotard be so blind! Your admirable aunt! Well, Cupid is hoodwinked, doubtless. First-rate advice! To drag a young girl into poverty. Some people are children all their lives, and such were the last generation of Barnards. I hope the present may turn out wiser.'

'True to yourself, Aunt Betsey!' said Charles, throwing down the half-sheet of delicate satin note-paper that enshrined that lady's aristocratic sentiments. 'How could that noble, unselfish Uncle James ever have fallen in love with you?'

'Most admirable aunt!' exclaimed Pynsent, taking up the letter; 'every one has his monomania, and you have always had yours. I esteem you for your consistency. The only inconsistent thing you ever did was marrying a plebeian; but there the fear of old-maidism overcame you.'

'Uncle Timothy wishes it, I am sure!' ejaculated Charles, as he read letter the third; 'one can see it through all.'

'Poor Uncle Timothy!' was the rejoinder on the opposite side of the question; 'he wishes what he thinks every one else wishes. He never knew what worldly prudence was, and so at nearly seventy he is poor and almost blind.'

'But he is happy,' said Charles, 'nevertheless.'

'Yes, thank God! happy in a clear conscience, the hope of a better world, and the love of all who know him.'

'And who would desire a more glorious old age?' asked Charles triumphantly.

'But Uncle Timothy never married,' was the quiet reply.

'Jessie is certainly a perfect character,' again commented Charles, as he read the last letter; 'but I sometimes think her prudence makes her cold and calculating. I suppose, after all, a woman may be too good to be agreeable.'

'That from you, Charles?' said Pynsent reproachfully.

'Forgive me; but Jessie was never in love, and how can she judge of my feelings?'

'Perhaps Jessie has been more in love, and more warmly and sincerely constant, than you are ever likely to be; but she is unselfish, and you are'—

'Not selfish!—oh, do not say that! I simply wish to rescue Tiny at once from misery, and I know my own powers of gaining a livelihood.'

'So be it, Charles. You know the trite old maxims about "knowing oneself," and Peter the Great's notions of self-government, etc., so I will not moralize; but as to Jessie, she has learned them all by heart, and I am thankful for such a sister.'

'And I for such a brother and sister,' said Charles, extending his hand to Pynsent, and grasping his as soon as it was offered. 'So you must come down to Peckham to-morrow, and give the unprotected and orphan girl a brother and sister likewise by giving her to me.'

Why did Pynsent suddenly withdraw his hand and put it before his eyes? No bystander, not even Charles, could have told; for in a few seconds he removed it, and with a clear glance and frank tone replied,—

'To-morrow is very soon, but I am ready if you are; and if it is to be such a hasty affair, it may as well be done at once. I say, old fellow, you and Tiny must put up here until you can find a proper house of your own; there is room for us all. But I must be off to a patient. You will ruin my profession, if you go on talking of love and matrimony.'

The following morning, at about eleven o'clock, there was seen within one of the Peckham churches a simple bridal party. Charles and Tiny stood before the altar, both ready to make, and intending to keep faithfully, the solemn vows they made. Tiny looked even paler than usual, but serene and happy. She had no occasion for tears, for she had no friend to leave behind, and all to gain. The plain morning dress and bonnet that had for the day replaced the mourning, were white, and that was all that was bridal about it. Pynsent had provided her with a beautiful bouquet of lilies of the valley, as if he thought that nothing with colour could become one so pale and delicate. There were two little girls in white, her pupils heretofore, who acted the parts of bridesmaids, and the good nurse who was with Mrs. Eveleigh when she died. As Pynsent gave Tiny's hand to Charles, and heard each utter words that bound them to one another for life, perchance he trembled slightly, and a little chill fell on his warm, manly heart; but it vanished when he kissed Tiny tenderly, and whispered that she was now his sister.

It was not a very cheerful wedding; neither was it a sad one. Tiny was thinking of poor Mrs. Eveleigh, who had so lately sat a sufferer in that picture-garnished room, and wondering whether she were with them in the spirit; and Pynsent was looking forward to the uncertain future, and fearing lest his brother's golden schemes should be disappointed, and the delicate bride reduced to worse trials than she might have had to bear alone. Charles was all hope and happiness.

Two hundred and fifty pounds in hand, and talent enough to win at least double that sum by next year, what had he to fear? He and Tiny would go for a fortnight to the sea, and then return and set to work in earnest.

A neat cab was at the door to convey the young couple to London Bridge, whence they were to travel by South-Eastern Railway to Folkestone, and thence to some quiet cottage by the sea, where they might have love and nature all to themselves. Tiny's small portion of luggage was soon packed into the vehicle, but the various painting apparatus of bride and bridegroom were less easily stowed away. Even during the honeymoon their beloved art was not to be neglected. All was ready at last, and the little party were to separate. Once more Pynsent kissed his sister-in-law, and shook hands with his brother. The little maidens, in their white frocks, with tearful eyes hung round the neck of their dear instructress, and the nurse bade her 'God-speed.' The sun shone out bravely, and the one or two sparrows that haunted the house-top chirped merrily, as much as to say, You have nature at least in your favour. And so doubtless they had, for true love and nature generally go hand in hand, as we hope they will do till 'death them doth part.'

Pynsent sat between the two little maidens, and soon succeeded in comforting them, and thereby comforting himself. He gave them half-a-crown apiece, and told them to buy a pretty picture book with it, and to keep it for Tiny's sake.

'I always said Mrs. Eveleigh and her daughter were quite respectable, sir,' said the mother of the children.

'I should like to hear any one say they were not, ma'am,' thundered Pynsent. 'I would not advise such a one to come within pistol-shot of me.'

CHAPTER XXXVII.

'If it be I, as I suppose I be,
I have a little dog at home, and he knows me;
If it be I, he'll wag his little tail;
If it bain't I, he'll bark and he'll rail.'

NURSERY SONG.

WHEN Pynsent returned home, he was informed by his servant that various requests had been made for his attendance on various patients. Amongst others, there had been a servant from a hotel in Jermyn Street, desiring the immediate attendance of Mr. Barnard. Now, when Mr. Barnard was sent for, it was usually by some old friend or patient who had not been informed of the change of dynasty in Duke Street, and Pynsent generally wrote or sent a message, enlightening the said friend or patient thereupon, and giving him a chance of calling in a fresh surgeon if he liked to do so. In the present instance the messenger had been very urgent, saying that a lady was extremely ill, and wished to see Mr. Barnard without a moment's delay. Pynsent thought it might be better to go at once; and as the patient was a lady, and possibly a young one, he went up-stairs, and deliberately put on his uncle's wig. Everybody has been guilty of some wilful deception during his life: this was Pynsent's. He had found the wig answer so well in one or two previous instances, that he invariably tried it upon new ladies. It certainly made him look ten years older.

Having arranged the wig to his satisfaction, he proceeded, seemingly a sober gentleman of fifty, to the lady at the hotel in Jermyn Street. The man who had been sent for him did not appear to know the name of the patient, and simply left the address; and Pynsent inquired at the door,—

'You have a lady who is ill here, I believe. I am the surgeon who has been sent for.'

'Duke Street, sir?' asked the waiter.

'Yes.'

'Widow ladies, sir?'

'I do not know.'

'This way, sir. Your name, sir?'

'Burton.' The man was out of hearing.

'Mr. B——, the doctor, ma'am,' he said, opening a door on the first floor, and ushering Pynsent into a very handsome room.

'Oh, Mr. Barnard, I am so glad you are come! Do you remember me?'

A lady in a widow's cap walked across the room to meet the supposed Mr. Barnard, holding out both hands. She suddenly stopped as she came nearer, and said,—

'I beg your pardon; this is a mistake.'

'I—ah!—Mr. Barnard has given up practice, madam, and I have succeeded him,' stammered Pynsent, confused.

'I am sorry,' said the lady, evidently disappointed; 'where is he?'

'He is in Somersetshire with his relations.'

'At?'—began the lady.

'My dear,' interrupted a weak voice from a sofa, 'will you see if anything can be done for me?'

The lady returned to the other end of the room, motioning to Pynsent to follow her.

'My mother is greatly out of health, and wished to consult Mr. Barnard. This is Mr. Barnard's successor, mamma; will you speak to him?'

'I should rather have seen Mr. Barnard, my dear,' was the reply, in a peevish tone of voice; 'but I daresay this gentleman will do something for me.'

'Another widow!' muttered Pynsent to himself, and he thought of Sam Weller's father and his advice about 'vidders,' saying, or rather thinking, that two must be 'equal to forty single women.'

The younger lady placed a chair near the sofa of the invalid for Pynsent, and withdrew. So great had been Pynsent's confusion at being so suddenly addressed as his uncle, that he had not even looked at her; besides, he never had been given to contemplating ladies' faces, and now he had lost Tiny, he never meant to think or look at a woman again. He managed, nevertheless, to discover that the lady left behind was of middle age, and of soft appearance and manners,—the remains, in short, of a fair beauty without any great expression of countenance, and consequently no longer very attractive in appearance. He also soon found out that she was nervous, dyspeptic, and wholly wrapped in herself and her ailments, without any real disease, but imagining that she had every bad symptom that everybody had ever had, since the time of Adam to the present day.

'Bread-pills, and water coloured and flavoured in every possible manner,' thought Pynsent, whilst he felt his patient's pulse, looked at her tongue, listened to her details of imaginary ills, and questioned her as gravely as if he had really believed that she had all the diseases she fancied.

We said that Pynsent's one deception was his wig. I fear we must add another, that he enjoyed and encouraged along with many others of his medical brethren, *videlicet*, that of wearing a grave face when his patients were resolved to be in a dying state, whether he himself believed them to be so or not. He began life by resolutely trying to make a nervous invalid he attended, and a rich one, believe that there was nothing the matter with him but nervousness,—and that is bad enough: he lost his patient and his fees, both having gone to a doctor who was willing to let him have his own way.

'It is a melancholy weakness,' thought Pynsent, as the lady in the Jermyn Street hotel bewailed her condition, 'but we must humour it.'

'You think I may live some few months?' asked she.

'Decidedly, madam; there is no immediate danger in your case, and I hope, with time and care, we may succeed in relieving you.'

Be it observed aside, that Pynsent had got into the royal pronoun 'we,' in vogue amongst his fraternity.

'India was my destruction,' said the patient.

Pynsent opened his ears; but the remembrance of India apparently was too much for the invalid, who began to cry.

The other widow's cap popped into the room. Pynsent suspected that it had been listening through the door communicating with the next apartment. It said,—

'May I come in? I am afraid you have been talking too much, mamma;' and it was placed exactly opposite Pynsent.

'Might I trouble you for a pen and ink?' began Pynsent; 'or, no, I will just call at the chemist's and order the prescriptions to be sent.'

He looked at the younger lady suddenly, and found a wicked pair of blue eyes fixed, with a mischievous expression, on his wig. He always fancied everybody looked at the wig when he had it on, just as he knew a third person must think him a humbug when he humoured a nervous patient. He had no doubt the pretty young widow had found him out both ways. He was confused, and rose to depart.

'When shall I see you again?' asked the mamma.

'I will call in the course of the week.'

'Oh, to-morrow at the latest! I may be dead in the course of a week.'

'Very well, madam, to-morrow,' said Pynsent, bowing.

He was impelled to look again at the pretty widow. There was a ludicrous smile about the mouth, but the eyes still sought his wig.

Pynsent absolutely blushed, as he bowed once more, muttered 'Good-morning,' and took his departure, without leaving his card, or inquiring the name of his patient.

'There is certainly a likeness to somebody,' said Pynsent, as he walked down Jermyn Street and into St. James's Street, and thence to Piccadilly, to his chemist's.

In spite of Tiny, so lately married, the face of that pretty widow haunted him. She was somewhere about thirty years old, he fancied,—she might have been either less or more; at all events, she was quite young. He could not help wishing that he had looked again; he was determined to do so on the morrow.

The morrow came, and Pynsent went to the two widows, still with his uncle's wig barely covering his own hair. He found them, as before, together. He made his bow, and the younger lady her curtsey, soon after which ceremony she again withdrew.

The mamma went through all her symptoms, varying them somewhat from the previous day, and saying that she thought the medicine had done her good.

'The fact is, I do not like to alarm my daughter by saying how dangerously ill I really am,' she said, 'but I feel it to be impossible for me to last long; she will not see it, poor thing, but really is quite in spirits sometimes, and that is too much for me. I had a remarkably good constitution once; but twenty or thirty years in an Indian climate would ruin the best in the world. I should not have been there so long, but my daughter married, and my husband got a lucrative appointment, and so we were all sacrificed. This fearful war has made us both widows.'

Here the younger lady appeared.

'I tell mamma she will get quite strong and well if she can go into the country,' she began, seating herself opposite Pynsent, and taking up some work.

'Ah, my dear,' sighed her mother, 'you little know what I suffer, or you would not be so hopeful.'

'But I know of a most charming place, that would cure any one, if we could only get you there. You know Somersetshire?' addressing Pynsent.

Pynsent looked at her, and again met the mischievous eyes.

'Yes, very well,' he replied.

'And Mr. Barnard is there! How I should like to see him again! I once met him in Somersetshire. Do you know anything of his family?'

'Would you just be kind enough to feel my pulse?' interrupted the mother. 'I think I must have an increase of fever.'

Pynsent did so, and said it was rather quick, but there was nothing alarming in it. Again he met those wicked blue eyes,

and saw the mouth curled into a smile. He bent over the invalid to hide his own amusement, and whilst he did so the owner of the wicked blue eyes presented a dose of soothing medicine to her mamma; in so doing she managed, either inadvertently or by *malice prepense*, to stretch across Pynsent's head, and fairly to push off his wig, which fell into his lap.

'Ten thousand pardons!' she exclaimed, stooping to pick up the wig, and resolutely fixing the eyes on her poor confused victim.

'Louisa! I am ashamed of you!' exclaimed the mother. 'You certainly never will be anything but a child. Really, my dear sir,—anything so alarming, so distressing. You do not care for any one's feelings.'

'Do not be quite shocked, my dear mother, but now allow me to introduce you to an old friend in a natural state. Mr. Pynsent Burton of Fairfield, brother of my very dear friends, Jessie and Anna; nephew of two most excellent uncles; and member of the best family in the whole world. Forgive me, but I do not think the wig improved you, and your hair is nearly as thick as ever, and you are neither bald nor grey.'

The pretty widow had spoken hastily, without looking at Pynsent, holding the wig in her hand. When Pynsent rose in astonishment, and their eyes fairly met, she added, frankly holding out her right hand,—

'Is it possible that you have quite forgotten the *missey* schoolgirl whom you used to despise and torment? How altered I must be! But I almost knew you yesterday, and was quite sure of you to-day.'

'Is it possible?' exclaimed Pynsent, suddenly aroused as from a dream. 'I am very glad to see you; I little thought—I little expected'—and he grasped the proffered hand so warmly by way of completing his sentence, that the colour rose brightly in the cheek of the young widow.

'And now you must shake hands with mamma, who knows you quite well,' she said, approaching the invalid, who, in the excitement of the little scene, had actually risen, unaided, from the sofa, and was ready to give Pynsent a friendly greeting.

Pynsent had spoken the truth, he was very glad to see Louisa Colville again,—or, as we must now call her, Mrs. Egerton. When he looked at her once more, he was astonished that he had not recognised her. She was quite as pretty as when he saw her at Fairfield; more womanly, of fuller form,—older, in short, but the same. There were the same soft blue eyes that kindled into such fun and wickedness at times; the same serene mouth, that became so eloquent of mirth when anything moved the spirit of wit within; and the same clear expression of

countenance. The complexion and hair were darker, and the widow's cap was a disguise in itself; and these were the principal changes. She did not look as if grief for a departed husband had very much subdued her spirits. Pynsent felt rather glad than sorry to see those widow's weeds; he did not stop to inquire why, hard-hearted fellow! for he knew that he had no personal interest in the matter; still he looked at them approvingly. He could not imagine that fair young woman with a husband twenty or thirty years older than herself.

'Allow me to restore you your property,' said Louisa, gently pushing the wig across the table, 'and to beg your pardon for my rudeness; but it was too irresistible. I suppose you think you are too captivating in your own proper head of hair?'

'Louisa!' said Mrs. Colville reproachfully.

'I am only beginning what I used to long to do when I was afraid, mamma,—to pay Mr. Pynsent Burton off for innumerable insults. Do you remember how you used to annoy Anna and me?'

'I only did you justice,' said Pynsent; 'but Anna, when did you see her last?'

'I have not seen her for some years, and she has quite ceased to correspond with me.'

Here followed a long and interesting conversation, during which much was said that has been already mentioned in this history, and some few events that have been omitted. From Mrs. Colville Pynsent learned that General Colville and Colonel Egerton had both fallen in the dreadful war still carrying on in India, and in which Nelson Burford and Chatham Michelson were engaged. She spoke of Nelson as having acquired a considerable reputation for bravery, and of his promotion on the field of battle. His courage and prudence were so remarkable, that his men would follow him blindly into any danger or difficulty, and the natives both feared and respected him.

'I met him once,' said Louisa, 'and inquired after you all at Fairfield. He answered very calmly, until I said something about Anna. You know the firm expression of mouth he always has, that I used to declare was like one of the lions in the Zoological Gardens when he was meditating a spring. Well, his teeth must have regularly stuck into one another when I asked for Anna. He could not separate them. I had to wait an age for an answer, and then he said he had not heard of Mrs. Michelson for some time. I pitied him when I saw how pale he turned, and felt convinced that he must have been attached to Anna, which I rather suspected at Fairfield. Major Burford is a man I should not like to offend; I am sure he would never forgive.'

'He would never forget,' said Pynsent; 'he is of too noble a nature not to forgive. And what do they say of Michelson?'

'I hear that he and Anna are universal favourites, but I fear they are extravagant. He is as gallant an officer as possible when on duty, but careless in his general habits. In short, he is what he always was, and Anna is as fascinating as ever, and the idol of everybody.'

'We hear,' said Pynsent, 'that she is trying to make up her mind to return to England with her little girl, who is another of the doomed victims of that horrible India. She does not like to leave her husband, and cannot resolve to send the child home; she seems wrapped up in her.'

'I saw her once,' rejoined Louisa, 'after the death of one of her children. I shall never forget her: just as excitable as she used to be in joy, she was in grief, and you would have imagined that the whole world had been suddenly torn from her.'

'You are not like your sailor brother, Mr. Burton,' said Mrs. Colville; 'he is so very handsome.'

'A doubtful compliment, mamma,' said Louisa.

'Peter and Anna were the beauties of the family,' said Pynsent, smiling.

'I greatly admire dark men,' said Mrs. Colville; 'but I do not quite like your regular brunettes, they want softness. O dear me! this conversation is too much for me, I fear.'

'That reminds me that I have a dozen patients to see,' said Pynsent, starting up and looking at his watch. 'It is so pleasant to talk over old times that I have forgotten my duty.'

'And this?' said Louisa, touching the wig.

'I suppose I have forgotten that also,' replied Pynsent; 'will you give it lodging for the present?'

'Till you go to visit some other lady patients? I will put it up in lavender. I know from whom you stole it.'

'And I am to go on with the mixture, and take everything that is strengthening?' asked Mrs. Colville.

Pynsent looked compassionately at Louisa as he said 'Yes,' but there was no sign of discontent or satire in her face. She had resumed the placid demeanour of years gone by.

'You have forgiven me?' she said, almost shyly, as they shook hands.

Pynsent's hearty, friendly look and shake of the hand were the answer, as he hastened away.

That evening Pynsent took himself to task, as was his wont, something as follows:—

'Pish! pshaw! folly! nonsense! If anybody else had been such a fool, I should have voted him to a lunatic asylum. I do

not believe I am myself. In short, I always had a certain kind of belief in metempsychosis and transmigration of souls, and somebody else has come into me, I am sure of it. That somebody else has been a confounded sawney, and always falling in love. He saw a school-girl and a baby ten or twelve years ago at his own house, and just because they were pretty, blue-eyed dolls, he fancies himself in love with both, alternately, as they chance to present themselves before him. No, no, as the little woman said, returning from the fair, "This is none o' me." It wasn't Pynsent Burton who was almost sentimental about that pale lily of a child, Tiny, only yesterday, and is indulging in admiring thoughts of that pretty full-blown rose of a mischievous little widow to-day. If it is, I will never say my soul is my own again, as long as I live. How she is come out! She used to be as shy as a pigeon, now she is able to chatter like a magpie. I wonder whether I should like her more or less than I used to like her, upon further acquaintance. There certainly is a power in early associations that there is in nothing else. I should have passed her by without a second thought, if I had not known her years ago; and now I think her so very pretty and agreeable! Well, here goes! I make a vow that I will never think of any woman again as long as I live,—I, an old bachelor, who have devoted myself to science and—and my dear sister Jessie for life! Come along, old fellow!'

With this winding up Pynsent opens the book-case, and takes down a ponderous medical book, into which he resolutely plunges, and, we hope and believe, forgets all the women in the universe before he has read two pages.

But Pynsent is obliged to visit his patient daily; nay, so conveniently near is Duke Street, that he is sometimes sent for twice a-day. The ladies remove into a lodging to continue near him, and Mrs. Colville allows herself to be a trifle better. He sees the pretty school-girl that he lost his heart to years ago, transformed into the almost prettier woman, and he sees her under fresh auspices. As the cheerful nurse and companion of a nervous, *exigeante* mother, her qualities of heart and her disposition are brought out. True, she must have her jest, either half-smothered, or sparkling out openly, upon everything that touches her strong sense of the ridiculous, even though that mother be the subject of it; but she is always ready to amuse or attend to the imaginary miseries of the invalid, forgetful of her own amusement.

Thus for about a month Pynsent and Louisa are constantly thrown together,—sometimes alone, sometimes with Mrs. Colville. They even have begun to quarrel over a game of chess when

Pynsent has a spare hour in the evening, and to make various disputes upon every species of folly. At this epoch Charles and Tiny have returned to take up their abode, until September, in the little cottage at Peckham, resolutely refusing Pynsent's hospitality as regards board and lodging, but taken possession of the old studio at the top of the house for painting. Pynsent is happy to find that he can meet Tiny without any extraordinary sensations, and treat her in a brotherly way. He is proud of her, too, in spite of the uncertainty that hangs over her; and when he takes her to call on Mrs. Egerton, and sees the two *adoratas* together, he laughs in his sleeve, and says, 'What a fool I have been! the first and last time, however.' Then he compares the two, and returns to his notion of metempsychosis. The soft, plump, arch, blue-eyed Louisa; the pale, slight, spiritual, violet-eyed Tiny! Light and dark are not more different. In spite of widowhood, and the past miseries of war and danger, the one is rosy and full of life; whilst the other, just married, and with every hope of the future bright and glorious, is pensive and shadowy, with a certain look of the 'grim spectre' in her face.

'Mamma is mad about Fairfield to-day,' said Louisa to Pynsent. 'She has suddenly taken it into her head that Fairfield would cure her, and that Jessie would make up for the deficiencies in her daughter. Do you think Jessie would take compassion on us?'

'You shall judge for yourself,' said Pynsent, giving a letter to Louisa, who read it, and said,—

'Oh, how very kind! Welcome to such poor board and lodging as Fairfield can afford! Dear, happy, quiet Fairfield! And you will come down, will you not? Do you remember that one bright Christmas? I never knew real happiness before and scarcely since.'

Ere yet another week was past, Pynsent saw Mrs. Colville and her daughter off per railway for Fairfield, and Mrs. Colville's last words were, 'I do not know what I shall do without you, Mr. Burton; you have really done me good.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

'No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison:
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
And ask of thee forgiveness.'—*King Lear.*

WE must allow some six or eight months to pass slowly by, during which time much may have happened of moment that we have not time to chronicle, and much that will evolve in the sequel. The scene is the large airy room in the upper storey in Pynsent's house in Duke Street, which has been devoted to Charles as a studio; the actors are the young artist and his wife. The room has an excellent light for painting, and Pynsent has caused it to be made in every possible way commodious and agreeable. It is, like most similar rooms, hung round with sketches of every description. Here is a little bit of English, there of Italian scenery; in one corner the head of a peasant girl, in another the figure of a Swiss hunter; on this side a group of English fishwomen, on that a storm at sea; and so on throughout the studio: little bits from nature, rough, and, to the uninitiated eye, coarse, and of small value, but ready to be worked into large paintings for immortality. Not the least conspicuous are various sketches of Tiny in different postures, and one or two of Pynsent. There are several easels in the room, on one of which is the picture that first attracted Charles's attention at Peckham, that of the mad beggar, done by Tiny; on another, the interior of a prison. Colours, boxes, pieces of rag, canvas, boards for paintings, and brushes, are scattered upon every available table, whilst a copy of Shakespeare and a few other books prove that literature is not forgotten.

We come at last to the one grand object of the studio. It is a picture that reaches almost from floor to ceiling. Were it in a frame, it would inevitably suffer the fate of the Vicar of Wakefield's family portraits,—it would not get in or out of the door. The subject is from King Lear, and is Lear and Cordelia in prison. The moment chosen is taken from Lear's own words:—

'When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
And ask of thee forgiveness.'

The old king is apparently rising from his kneeling posture, having one arm thrown round Cordelia's waist, and one hand in hers, as she attempts to raise him. His eyes are fixed, with

a loving, helpless, bright insanity, upon her face, as she bends slightly over him, whilst hers beam with a filial devotion upon him. Both are portraits. The insane beggar sat to Tiny for King Lear, and Tiny sat to Charles for Cordelia. It is a beautiful picture. Husband and wife have exerted every power of conception and execution to produce it, and the union of love and genius never conceived or executed anything more perfect. As in Charles's last picture, there is a strong light thrown upon the principal figures, which streams through a small grating in the prison, whilst the remainder of the painting is in deep shadow. Cordelia is represented in her queenly robes of Tyrian purple, over which her long hair falls, having escaped from the jewelled head-gear that had been supposed to bind it before she entered the prison. Some of the last effects are now being given to those flowing locks, and Tiny stands, a second Cordelia, with her long hair dishevelled, whilst Charles labours at the picture and portrait. It seems a strange repetition or duplicate, so like is the living, breathing woman to the pale, lovely, half ethereal Cordelia of the picture, bending over her beloved father, and endeavouring to raise him from his too abject posture: just such a personification of grief, pity, and love might Shakespeare himself have imagined, and just such a face of wild tenderness and joy and madness might he have given to King Lear.

'You are tired, dearest Tiny,' says Charles, as he puts one extra ray of light to the beaming eye of Cordelia, and withdraws a pace to see its effect, then looks at his wife. 'You will be glad at least when this weary work is done, will you not, my Cordelia?' and he strokes the long hair and kisses the pale cheek.

'Tired? glad? O no!' replies Tiny. 'When did I ever know what life and enjoyment were before? To paint such a picture, and with you! to have labour, fame, name, life itself, one with you, and to know that as long as any of these last we two live together! Is there anything more to wish in this world?'

'And what do you think of Cordelia?' said Charles, drawing her nearer to the picture.

'That she is beautifully painted, at least,' was the reply.

They stood hand in hand for a few seconds before the canvas.

'I can improve that!' exclaimed Tiny, suddenly moving off and taking up a brush and palette; then, standing on a stool before the painting, she added a few white hairs to the head of King Lear, that increased the wildness of the effect.

'The eyes want more melancholy,' she said; 'how can we give it? There must have been a large proportion of melancholy in his countenance.'

'The mouth would convey melancholy as well as the eyes,' said Pynsent. 'Have you not seen the slight movement of the lips that try to smile make a face much more sad than any amount of expression in the eyes?'

'Yes; but the expression of the eyes is affected by the mouth; both must agree.'

'True. Give a touch to that mouth, and you will see the eyes apparently assume a different expression.'

And so it proved. The touch of melancholy thrown into the king's face completed the perfection of the whole.

'It cannot be better, Tiny!' exclaimed Charles, delighted.

They continued to work together upon the picture, altering, improving, and adding to, what seemed to want neither alterations, improvements, nor additions; and continuing at intervals the less interesting portions of background and other accessaries.

'My Cordelia looks pale and fagged,' said Charles. 'I shall be so glad when the Academy opens, and we shall fairly have done our work; for as long as one day remains we shall go on with our "last touches," and still never think them the last.'

'You have promised a visit to Fairfield, if the picture sells. Think of the joy of seeing all that dear party, and taking Jessie your first hundred pounds towards completing the paying off of that odious mortgage!' said Tiny.

'Then Fairfield will be free, and we shall go on with a clear path before us, having all helped to raise the family name and respectability by honest labour and upright intention.'

'I rather think we are reckoning without being quite sure of our host,' said Tiny timidly. 'Remember the fable of the girl and her eggs.'

'Without our host? No!' exclaimed Charles. 'I am sure of selling this picture. Your King Lear alone is worth the money, if there is justice in England.'

'Haydon far surpassed my King Lear, and he was not fully appreciated until after his death,' suggested Tiny.

'Tiny, you are of a desponding nature.'

Poor Tiny was standing, or rather kneeling, on the topmost step of a pair of steps, painting energetically; but in truth she was so tired that her second self, her dear Charles's beautiful Cordelia, began to appear a dreadful uncertainty, and she was thinking, 'What if the picture does not sell, after all?' With weariness of body how the hopes grow weary too!

'I see how it is,' said Charles, suddenly mounting the steps behind her and lifting her off; 'you are half dead with fatigue. Now, give me the brush and the palette and the apron. There! go and wash your hands, and put up the hair, and make yourself a tidy little Tiny again, and fit for Pynsent's sight.'

'I tell you what it is, good people,' said a voice in the passage, —the door opened, and Pynsent appeared,—'I will turn you out of this room, and sentence you to the back attic. Here have I been waiting dinner for this last half-hour, whilst you have been torturing that mad old king and his beautiful but half-attired daughter. I mean that as a compliment to you, Mistress Cordelia.'

Tiny slipped away to make herself neat.

'You will kill that poor child, Charles, if you let her work so much,' said Pynsent. 'I tell you she is not equal to it. It was a great mistake to allow you two painters to come together. We shall see you dying, both of you, not "of a rose, in aromatic pain," but "of oils, in consumptive languor."'

'We must go through with it now,' said Charles; 'but Tiny shall work no more.'

In due time the great picture was finished, and sent to the Royal Academy. It commanded at once a good and conspicuous position. Every one had augured, from the last, a first-rate contribution this year, and no one was disappointed.

But Charles and Tiny only waited to see it placed, to start for Fairfield. Urged by all their friends, when the labour was over, they sought rest and country air, both of them looking ill, and feeling wearied by intense application.

It remained for Pynsent to watch the effect produced by his brother's picture. He was at the opening of the Exhibition, and tried in vain to appear calm, as he listened to the comments made on a painting upon which that brother's livelihood depended for the coming year.

But he heard comparatively few disparaging remarks. 'King Lear and Cordelia in Prison' had made his brother's reputation, together with that of his young wife, whose name was henceforth to be immortalized with his.

Pynsent walked through the rooms, and was pleased to find that he saw no purely historical painting that he considered finer than his brother's. He returned to it again in time to see Mr. Michelson approach the picture. He could not help feeling an interest in all that Mr. Michelson did, said, or thought, though he despised the man. He was too nearly connected with Anna to be disregarded; moreover, he had been the purchaser of Charles's last picture. He was alone, and so was Pynsent, in

the midst of the crowd that surrounded the great attraction. At first he walked leisurely up to the picture, and, with book in one hand and eyeglass in the other, appeared to be about to examine it critically. No sooner, however, had he glanced at it than he turned very pale, his hands trembled, and the book dropped on the floor, and the glass and chain to their usual places on his waistcoat. Some one near picked up the book and restored it; he took it mechanically, without any acknowledgment. Every one but Pynsent was too busy with his own affairs to notice Mr. Michelson, and he felt really thankful when he saw that gentleman stagger to a seat opposite the picture. A bystander approached him with, 'Ah, Michelson! how d'ye do? Fine, that, isn't it?'

He seated himself beside Mr. Michelson, who did not appear to notice him.

'You are in a trance, or entranced,' said the stranger, giving him a poke with his elbow.

'Ah, yes! Really! is that you, Marshall?' stammered Mr. Michelson at last.

'What do you think of the painting?'

'Painting! yes! Can you—can you tell me who that is?'

'That is Cordelia. Have you not seen the catalogue? It is by the same artist, I fancy, who painted your "Sedgemoor."'

'What is his name? Who is she?'

'The name of both is Burton. "Mr. and Mrs. C. Burton" is the signature appended to the motto.'

'I am not feeling well,' said Mr. Michelson, still looking at the picture.

'What is the matter?—you are as pale as death.'

'I do not know; but if I should be ill, secure that picture for me at any price.'

'Shall I help you out, and get a cab?' asked Mr. Marshall anxiously.

'Thank you.'

Mr. Michelson rose with difficulty, and, assisted by his friend, left the room, still looking back at the picture. Pynsent followed. When they reached the steps of the Academy, Pynsent hurried for a cab, and said to Mr. Marshall, as he passed him,—

'Allow me to call a cab. I have been watching your friend for some time, and saw how ill he looked.'

When the cab came, Mr. Michelson could scarcely stand, and Pynsent assisted him into it. Mr. Marshall looked alarmed.

'I am a surgeon. I do not think you need be terrified,' said Pynsent; 'it appears mere faintness.'

'Will you do me the favour of accompanying us?' said Mr. Marshall.

'Pray do,' said Mr. Michelson.

The three got into the cab, and drove to Grosvenor Square, Mr. Michelson's residence. Pynsent went into his house for the first time in his life. He told the footman to go at once for his master's medical man. Mr. Michelson did not know him, so he felt his pulse, and said he thought it had been a sudden spasm at the heart, but that he was recovering. Aside to the friend Pynsent declared the attack to have been a very near escape from paralysis. By the time that Dr. Dysart, Mr. Michelson's physician, arrived, the common applications in such cases had taken due effect, and Pynsent slipped away.

The next thing that Pynsent heard of Mr. Michelson was that he had purchased Charles's picture, and sent a cheque to him for five hundred pounds. A few weeks afterwards he had a letter from Fairfield, announcing, amongst other matters, the arrival of Mr. Michelson at the Hall, and the report that he was in bad health; also the pleasant intelligence from Jessie, that Charles had paid off one hundred pounds of the mortgage, and that she expected at Christmas to pay the remaining fifty, and thus to free Fairfield for ever from this long-standing pump on its constitution. 'We intend having a jubilee,' she wrote, 'when it is fairly paid, and you are to come down for the occasion. Louisa proposes a champagne supper and ball; and the absurdities constantly suggested amongst us are incredible. Uncle James declares for a bonfire; Captain Burford for an illumination of the three houses, Fairfield, the Grange, and his own, and an especial epistle to Nelson to invite him over for the occasion. I think you and I, at least, shall feel a weight removed from our minds, that has hung over them ever since that day in the hayfield; do you remember it? Louisa is more amusing and charming than ever, and if you do not come down and fall over head and ears in love with her, I will disown you. I willingly relinquish you as a bachelor brother upon this condition, and must be contented with Peter. Mrs. Colville is better, and becomes a degree more interesting; she lives on your daily letters of advice, and thinks you much more clever than Uncle Timothy, who has, nevertheless, to hear all her complaints. His sight is certainly improving; he can now see his way about tolerably, and begins to hope for recovery. Little Pickle is very much like his uncle, godfather, and namesake, and wants to see you very much. He takes immensely to Tiny, as who does not? Tiny quite devotes herself to Uncle Timothy, and they suit each other famously.'

Not long after the receipt of this letter there came Indian news of great importance, that occasioned at once tears of pride and sorrow to our friends. The war was drawing to a close, and the papers contained frightful accounts of havoc amongst our troops, made by the expiring efforts of Indian valour. Major Burford had been sent into the interior, and his division had been surprised by a large army of natives. He and his men had fought so desperately, that they put their enemies to flight, but just as the tide of victory was turning in his favour, he received a cut on his right arm that entirely disabled it. 'Fearing,' the journal proceeded to say, 'that his disappearance might discourage his men, and give new hopes to the enemy, he instantly took up his sword with his left arm, and, waving it over his head, shouted to his men, "Victory!" and, impelling his horse onward, dashed after the enemy, followed by the remainder of his battalion. This last gallant effort won the day. In a few minutes afterwards this noble officer was seen to fall from his horse, and as the officer who fought near him, Captain Wright, dismounted to assist him, he perceived, for the first time, that the Major held his sword with his left hand, and that he was fainting from loss of blood, owing to a wound that had nearly severed his right arm from his body. His arm is amputated, but he is doing well. We have no doubt that speedy promotion and honour will follow this gallant action. The enemy were entirely routed by the soldiers, infuriated at the wound their deservedly beloved officer had received, and there have been few passages in the story of Indian warfare more honourable both to the commander and his men.'

The next mail brought a letter from Nelson, or rather dictated by him, and signed with his left hand. Many a tear did that letter occasion to the good Captain Burford and Jessie, as they read it over and over again with pride and sorrow. It was so modest, so genuine. He only regretted the loss of his arm because it prevented him from pursuing the career he had begun; he did not glory in the fact that he was to retire upon full pay and a colonelcy,—he scarcely mentioned it; neither did he do more than slightly allude to the gratification he had experienced in receiving a testimonial from his brother-officers, in the shape of a massive inkstand of Indian gold; but he hoped that 'he should be a better son to his excellent father with his one arm, than he had been with two.'

The *Gazette* of the following month reported Major Michelson either killed or taken prisoner in a skirmish with the natives, but brought no letters either from Nelson or Anna, and the state of anxiety experienced by our party at Fairfield will be

readily understood by all who have had relations in India during times of war; that terrible India! which carries off so many of our best and bravest, either never to return, or to return changed and aged themselves, and finding every one they loved changed and aged as well.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

'Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests; in all time,
Calm or convulsed,—in breeze, or gale, or storm,
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime
Dark-heaving;—boundless, endless, and sublime,
The image of eternity,—the throne
Of the Invisible; even from out thy slime
The monsters of the deep are made: each zone
Obeys thee; thou goest forth dread, fathomless, alone.'

BYRON.

WE must retrace the steps we have taken with some of our friends, in order to pursue our course for a time with others; and we must transport ourselves to the deck of a vessel just about to sail from India to England. A boat has reached the ship with the last news of the war, and there is a great commotion amongst the crew and passengers, eager to gain the latest intelligence. No authentic despatches have been yet published, but various reports of the killed and wounded in a late engagement have been spread.

Amongst the passengers eagerly taking leave of friends, or seeing to luggage, or listening to the news just imported, are Anna Michelson and her little girl. Surrounded by a group of friends who have come to see them on board, they look melancholy and tearful, as if leaving India were a sad thing to both.

'Tell my husband that I shall write whenever it is possible,' said Anna to a lady who was holding her hand. 'If I could only have waited for him I should not have cared, but alone with this poor sick child! Oh, Mrs. Merton, it is dreadful! And then the uncertainty of hearing from him! and the war!' Poor Anna's tears flowed apace.

Just as she heard that there was intelligence of the war there was an order to clear the decks, and her friends were obliged to leave her.

'You will find the captain most attentive, and everything that can be done is arranged for your comfort. The surgeon is a very clever, intelligent man, and will be everything to Missey,'

said one of the gentlemen, as he pressed Anna's hand and turned away.

Anna was squeezing through the crowd, to gain a last look at her friends as they descended to the boat, when she heard some one near her say,—

'I hear that Major Michelson's wife is on board; I hope she has not heard, for these sudden reports are often unfounded.'

'"He and the whole troop cut to pieces" was the last news,' said some one else.

Anna gave a loud shriek, turned round to discover the speakers, and fell down insensible on the deck.

A black woman, her child's nurse, who had been standing with the little girl at a distance, ran forward, and, taking her in her arms, bore her out of the crowd. A tall military-looking man, who was near, attracted by the cry, followed, and asked the woman in Hindostanee whether he could be of any assistance. She begged him to take care of the little girl, whilst she and an elderly man, a fellow-servant, carried their mistress to her cabin below. The gentleman took the child's hand, and walked with her about the deck in search of the surgeon, whom he found, and sent at once to Anna. Meanwhile the ship was under weigh, and they were floating over the Indian Ocean.

'I cannot walk any more,' said little Anna. 'I will go to mamma, if you please.'

The tall gentleman looked at the child, and immediately perceived that she was ill. She was, as so many English-Indian children are, pale and sickly; she was tall and thin, with large eyes and long eyelashes, that gave the idea of consumption; she was more like her father than her mother, and had all his bright restlessness of expression.

'May I go to mamma?' she said again. 'I am so tired.'

'Will you not sit down here a very little with me, and watch the ship sail away from India?' asked the stranger, leading her gently to a bench. 'Shall you like to go to England?'

'I don't know. I shall like to see my aunt and my little brother, but I shall not like to leave my papa.'

'And will you tell me what your name is?'

'Missey,—they all call me Missey.'

'But you have a Christian name,—some other name besides Missey?'

'O yes; little Annabella, papa calls me, because, he says, my mamma is big Annabella.'

'Annabella,' repeated the stranger, looking into the child's face. 'That is a pretty name.'

'And my mamma is very pretty,' said little Anna, a flush so

bright spreading over her face that the stranger thought she had suddenly been restored to perfect health by the sea breeze; 'my mamma is beautiful, everybody says so. But I am so tired,—I must go to my mamma.'

'I will take you soon, if nurse does not come back for you; but if you put up the little feet so, and rest your head against me so, I think you will be more comfortable.'

The stranger procured a cloak to put under her, and arranged her little faded figure upon it, making her use his knee as a pillow, and in a few minutes she was asleep. He smoothed her hair and laid his hand on her little shoulder protectingly, drawing a heavy sigh as he did so.

Shortly afterwards the man-servant appeared.

'I beg your pardon, sir, I fear Missey is troublesome. Poor dear! shall I take her down to the cabin?' he said.

'Not unless you particularly wish it,—not on my account,' said the gentleman. 'How is your mistress?'

'As bad as can be, sir. She is no sooner out of one fit than she is into another. I never saw any one take on so; and may be it is not true, after all.'

'You mean the sudden news from the interior?'

'Yes, sir. They say my master and all his men have been regularly butchered.'

'Was Major Michelson your master? and is that lady his wife, and this his child?' asked the stranger, with a start of surprise and distress.

'Too surely, sir,' said the man; 'and God help my poor mistress, for she doted on him, though they did say'—the man checked himself.

The gentleman suddenly raised his hand from little Anna, and drew it across his eyes.

'Shall I take the young lady, sir?' asked the man.

'It seems a pity to disturb her. When she awakes I will bring her down to you. There does not seem to be any positive certainty of this dreadful event having happened. Is there no one who will tell your mistress so?'

'O yes, sir; all the lady passengers are trying hard to make her believe it, when she is sensible; but she can only repeat the words, "He and the whole troop cut to pieces!" over and over again, as if she had no tongue for anything else.'

'God help her!' ejaculated the unknown.

The child slept on peaceably, unconscious of what was passing beneath and around her.

The black nurse came to see after her, and to thank the stranger for his kindness.

'The ladies think, sir, that the sight of Missey might restore her mamma,' she said; 'but I am afraid for the dear child. She is too weak to bear any exertion, and so fond of her mamma that I think it would be her death if she saw her as she is now.'

This passed in Hindostanee.

The little girl must have heard it in her sleep, for she suddenly aroused herself, and in a pettish but authoritative voice said,—

'No, it would not; I will go to my mamma directly. Take me to mamma;' and herewith she began to cry.

'O dear! O dear! we must not let her cry for the world. Missey, darling, don't cry! you shall come to your mamma directly;' and, taking the poor, sickly, spoiled child in her arms, the black woman carried her down to the cabin that had been appropriated to their especial service.

Here two or three lady-passengers were endeavouring to comfort Anna, and the surgeon was still using restoratives, in the hope of calming the paroxysms of grief, which, with her usual impetuosity, she allowed to have full vent.

'Mamma! my own mamma!' cried the little Anna, as the nurse brought her into the cabin, 'what is the matter? Don't cry so, my own mamma!' and she jumped from the nurse's arms into those of her mother, and began to sob and scream almost as violently.

'You will kill Missey, ma'am,' said the servant, in a tone of extreme alarm.

The words had the desired effect. In a moment Anna rose from the sofa on which she had thrown herself, and, subduing the rising scream, took her child in her arms, and begged her to be quiet for her sake.

It was a long time before the mother and nurse could succeed in calming the excited and sobbing child. She had much of Anna's impetuosity of nature, and she was dangerously ill. It was on her account that they were now leaving India,—a last hope, and a forlorn one, of saving her life. The other children had died at her age, and of the same complaint. The affection of both parents was centred in her, and all, even to the leaving Major Michelson behind, must be sacrificed to her.

'What is the matter, my own mamma?' was the cry of the child, as she gazed into her mother's swollen and pallid face, so changed in one short hour.

'It is only leaving India and your papa, Missey dear,' whispered the nurse.

'Then let us go back again directly. Why did we come away?'

At last they succeeded in pacifying her, and in getting her to lie down on the sofa. Anna was obliged to sit on a low stool at

her side, to hold her hand, and to lean over her. The child soon sobbed herself to rest; the mother still watched, motionless, for fear of disturbing her, her head resting on one arm on the head of the sofa, her eyes bent on her last, only hope. Tears, that she could not move to wipe away, fell on the child's hair in torrents, and made it wet as with the rain from heaven. The poor black servant knelt down in a corner of the cabin, and said her simple prayers.

And still the beautiful ship sailed over a smooth sea, away from sultry India, towards Anna's native land that she had so often longed to see.

All this time the strange gentleman was pacing the deck, turning from time to time to the cabin stairs, in the hope of seeing some one who might tell him of Mrs. Michelson and her child. The surgeon satisfied him that the great shock had passed away, and that Anna was tolerably calm, but he had never, he said, seen such passionate grief.

There was an expression of melancholy in the stranger's face as he turned away from the surgeon and went to look out upon the broad ocean. It was a grave, calm face, and belonged to a soldier-like and dignified figure.

More than a week passed before he saw his little friend Anna again. Both she and her mother had been ill; sea-sickness added to the grief of the one and the weakness of the other, and quite prostrated them.

At last, however, one clear, sunshiny afternoon, the child was brought on deck. She asked at once for the kind gentleman, who came to her. He was shocked to see how much worse the little girl looked. A kind of sofa-bed had been made for her upon deck by her nurse, and he sat down by her side. Her mother had tied her white frock and hair with black ribbons, and she said confidentially in a whisper,—

'Mamma cries all day long; and she has cut off all her beautiful black hair, and put on her black satin gown, and made an ugly cap, and put on me these black ribbons, and they won't tell me why. Will you tell me?'

'I cannot, dear,' said the stranger, looking into the wistful little face.

'I like you,' said the child, putting her thin hand into his. 'You are kind like my own papa. What is your name?'

'You may call me what you like,' was the reply.

'Then I will call you uncle, because of my own Uncle Pynsent that mamma talks about.'

The stranger smiled sadly.

'Missey must not talk much, sir,' said the servant.

'Then I must read to her, to amuse her.'

'O yes! if you please,' said little Anna eagerly.

The gentleman went down to his cabin and began to turn over his store of books. He searched in vain for anything that seemed to promise amusement to a child. At last he took a large Bible in his hand and returned to the deck.

'Oh, that is a Bible!' exclaimed the child, with an air of disappointment; 'that is a Sunday book.'

'But suppose we see what a pleasant book it is for everyday. Do you know all the beautiful stories of children that there are in that book?'

'No, I never read any stories in it,' said the child, brightening up.

'And did no one ever read them to you?'

'No; it was so hot, and I used to be so tired on a Sunday. Mamma and papa used to read it out loud sometimes, but I did not know what it meant. They told me that it was the book that taught us to be good and to go to heaven, where my little brothers are gone. I wonder whether I shall go to heaven and see them again.'

'Yes, if you are like the good people the Bible tells us of.'

'But I don't think I am very good.'

'Then you must pray to be made good; but we will see what the Bible says.'

The stranger opened upon the story of Joseph, always so delightful to children. He did not read it, but related it, adding vivid descriptions of scenery here and there, or places, such as his knowledge or imagination supplied, and which served to fix the little girl's attention. He had evidently the talent of a story-teller. The black nurse, as well as the child, fixed her eyes on him, and he soon perceived a little group of sailors standing at a respectful distance, and listening attentively. Little Anna was breathless until Joseph was out of prison, at which part of the history her friend told her that he feared she would be tired if she listened too long at a time, and that they would finish it the following day.

Day after day the little reading party met on the deck, and each day the child seemed more and more interested in what she heard. The gentleman did not confine himself to the stories in the Old Testament, but managed to make the parables and historical portion of the New pleasant and intelligible by illustration and explanation. The life and sufferings of our blessed Saviour took a strong hold on Anna's mind, and, with a beautiful faith, she readily appropriated the fact that He had died for her.

'Now, mamma, I am sure that I shall go to heaven, and see my little brothers again,' she said one day, 'because Jesus Christ died to take me there.'

Her mother was frightened. She thought her child was surely going to die, and almost resolved to put a stop to the readings. But little Anna's will was too absolute for this. She went through, with tearful eyes and animated gestures, the account she had heard of our Saviour's sufferings on the cross; and ended by saying that He had invited little children to come to Him, and she was going. She should not be afraid to go to Christ, because He was so gentle and kind.

Anna folded her in her arms and wept over her, and entreated her not to say such things, or she would kill her; and then the child wept, and asked her mother to come and see the good uncle that she had found.

That evening, when the burning sun was set, and the air becoming cool, Anna stole, for the first time, to the deck with her child and the nurse. She stood and watched the waves as they rose around the ship, and fell back again into the immensity of ocean. Wild and melancholy thoughts flowed in with them. They were interrupted by little Anna's exclamation of –

'There he is, mamma! Will you send for him? Oh, do send for him!'

'As you like, my love,' was her reply, almost heedlessly.

'I will go,' said the child; and she crept away, followed by her nurse, for, alas! she had not the spring and elasticity of childhood to enable her to bound towards her friend.

He had seen them standing together at the side of the vessel, and, as if fearful of intruding upon the widow, was about to descend the cabin stairs.

'Will you come and see mamma?' said little Anna, taking his hand.

'Will you give her my card first of all, and then say I will come if she wishes?' said the gentleman, putting his hand into his pocket and drawing out a card.

Little Anna gave it to the nurse, saying,—

'You go; I will stay with my uncle.'

In a short time the nurse returned with a request that the gentleman would go to her mistress. He turned very pale, but, giving his hand to little Anna, he walked towards her mother.

They found her leaning against the side of the vessel, with her face seaward. Was it the Anna Burton of olden time? So pale—so harassed—her dark hair gone—a widow's cap making her look still paler—and her figure bent by grief!

'Mamma, here he is,' said little Anna, pulling her dress.

She held out her hand, whilst her head sank down. The gentleman took it. Why does he take it in his left hand? Alas! why?

Years of sorrow and warfare have changed them both,—Nelson and Anna. It is a sad meeting,—sympathy and duty on the one side, repentance and grief on the other.

The one is returning home laden with honours and respected by all men, but bereft of a right arm and with shattered health; the other is returning with a dying child, leaving, she believes, a dead husband behind her, and with a mind and body borne down by affliction: and thus they meet after all that passed years ago!

It is now for Nelson to support and comfort the broken-hearted woman who nearly broke his strong heart in those early days. There is no reproach or anger now in his voice or look. He has faced death in many ways lately,—eye to eye in battle, and tooth to tooth on the sick-bed; and he has conquered the enemy for the present, and with him all old animosities. He sees in Anna the friend of his youth and the widow of his friend.

'God will help you, Anna,' he says gently, his manly voice choked by an emotion that has nothing selfish in it.

She turned her large black eyes full upon him, and burst into tears.

He led her gently to the stairs, asking if he might come to her in her cabin.

'By and by,' she answered; and, leaving him and little Anna on deck, she went to her cabin, followed by the nurse.

In a short time he took little Anna down, and told her to go in and ask whether he might see her mamma. He was admitted. He seated himself opposite Anna, who was on a sofa; and the child, with her usual sickly 'I am so tired, mamma!' lay down by her mother's side and soon fell asleep. The interview was awkward at first, but Nelson's self-possession soon made it pleasant.

'I am ordered home,' he said, 'both because I am useless in the army now,'—glancing at the empty sleeve of his coat buttoned up to his waistcoat,—'and because the amputation of my arm left me so ill and weak, that a change was absolutely necessary. So I have looked my last on India and on my profession.' This was said with a sigh.

'Oh, they will all be so glad to see you! You have, at least, lost nothing of the love they always bore you,' said Anna.

'I do not know; I am so altered.'

Anna longed to say something of her husband. Nelson anticipated her.

'I think,' he said gravely, 'you are wrong to give full belief to any unaccredited reports. We have all been killed, over and over again, by such. I was once said to have been cut down in an engagement with the natives, when I had actually made them surrender to a man. In my last battle, where I lost the most valuable part of myself, I was reported dead. You must, at least, think imprisonment or captivity quite as probable as death; and now there is sure to be an exchange of prisoners, and at least temporary cessation of hostilities.'

'Oh, if I could think so!' said Anna, clasping her hands and allowing one of the old gleams of animation to shoot from her eyes.

Nelson saw it and withstood it.

'We will hope it, at least. When did you see him last?'

'He was with me till within the last three weeks, arranging everything for our departure. Then his regiment was ordered to go to the interior to help the —th Bengal Light Cavalry, and we were separated at almost an hour's notice.'

'And you were obliged to sail so soon?'

'Yes; he left me with the understanding that I was on no account to change our plans. He said the life of our child depended upon her going at once to England, and everything else must give way to that. His return was uncertain, but it was rather expected his regiment would be ordered home shortly after this expedition.'

'You go direct to Fairfield!'

'Yes; I have written to announce our coming.'

'I can imagine the state of excitement they are all in at the prospect of seeing you again. I did not say when I should return, but in a general way hinted at the probability of its being soon. I shall find my father much altered, I fear.'

'Jessie says he is just the same as ever.'

'Do you know Aunt Jessie?' here broke in little Anna, roused from her usually slight slumber by a sudden noise on deck.

'Yes, dear, I have known her all my life,' replied Nelson, with a pleasant smile.

'And do you love her as mamma does?'

'Everybody loves your Aunt Jessie, little Anna, and I hope you will grow up as good as she is.'

The bigger Anna could not help glancing at Nelson's face with some degree of curiosity as he said this, but there was nothing to be remarked in it but a look of sincerity that Jessie would have liked to see, because it told that he spoke from his heart.

CHAPTER XL.

'Cease here longer to detain me,
Fondest mother, drowned in woe;
Now thy kind caresses pain me:
Morn advances—let me go.

'See yon orient streak appearing!
Harbinger of endless day.
Hark! a voice, the darkness cheering,
Calls my new-born soul away.'—CECIL.

POOR Anna had great need of protection and kindness during the remainder of that weary and melancholy voyage, and well was it for her that she had Nelson to help and comfort her. Little Anna grew weaker and weaker every day, and the 'I am so tired!' was repeated so often, that it became a painful reminder of the precarious state of her health. She did not suffer any pain, but seemed to be literally wasting away. No one but Anna had a hope of her recovery; few thought she would live to reach England. Fortunately they had a favourable passage. As the ship glided gently over the bosom of the deep, so her young spirit seemed to be quietly gliding away to eternity. As she grew weaker she became less restless, and was quite happy to be laid upon the sofa in the cabin, or upon a temporary bed on deck, provided she had her mamma or Nelson by her side. The Bible stories and the kind narrator's patience were inexhaustible. She took more and more pleasure in listening to them, and would generally fall asleep with her hand clasped in her mother's, whilst Nelson spoke or read. He was so earnest himself in what he did, and related so simply and clearly, that Anna became also a gratified and benefited listener, and wondered, as she looked at the shattered soldier, what power had converted him into so gentle and humble a Christian.

One day she took courage to ask him what had made him so well acquainted with his Bible. He opened its first leaf and showed it to her. 'Nelson Burford, from his loving father,' was written there, and underneath the words, 'Fight the good fight of faith.'

'Anna,' said Nelson solemnly, 'I owe to my father, whom I grievously offended, and to your sister, all my religious impressions. When I returned to India last, it was with no very kindly feelings. I seemed to owe a grudge to all the world, and my only wish was to die in battle. Forgive me for speaking plainly: it is best for us both that you should understand me.

I had a demon within me. This mood lasted a long time, and I did not care to struggle against it. I was morose to my friends, —a fiend to myself. One day I was ill, and, wonderful for me, confined to my bed. It was a Sunday. I always preserved too great a regard for the day, and too vivid a recollection of early habits, to read profane literature on that day, therefore took up the Bible, a book, I am sorry to say, that I had not for some time read much of. I thought I would open it by chance, and see what chapter or verse would best suit my mood. I opened the title-page, and read my father's favourite text, "Fight the good fight of faith." I paused upon it, and suddenly the remembrance of the day when he gave me the Bible flashed upon me,—the day of my first start for India, some thirteen years before. I saw his kind face and tearful eyes; I recalled every word that he then uttered: "Read it, boy, and never be ashamed of it. I have weathered many a storm, and been on strange waters, but have always found that book my surest compass." Those were his exact words. Suddenly the whole scene was before me. Pynsent and Jessie had come to see the last of me. There was my father's rough, kind face, Pynsent's friendly eyes, and Jessie's sweet smile and sisterly words. Brother and sister they had always been to me, and he a father to all of us. From that one day of sickness I date my return to my own natural self, and, I hope, my restoration to something like right reason. I have never ceased to think of those three friends as they then appeared to me. The intermediate years have seemed to vanish, and I feel that I, a maimed and grey-haired man, shall meet my father in hale middle age, and those friends of my childhood still the boy and girl I left them.'

Anna looked with astonishment upon the man she had always thought so unsentimental. There was a pleasant dreaminess in his countenance, that made her fancy he was even then calling up those early scenes. She wondered whether there were any affection still left for herself, or whether she too had returned in his imagination to the pert child of ten, whom he used to spoil and lecture by turns.

'And the Bible?' asked little Anna, who had been listening to the conversation with closed eyes, as she often did. 'Did you love the pretty stories as I love them now, and learn to tell them so nicely?'

'Yes, little Anna; I learned by degrees to love and reverence what God has mercifully taught you to love so young.'

'And how did Aunt Jessie help you to be good?'

'By being good herself, and so setting a good example to every one else.'

'And will you marry Aunt Jessie, uncle? It would be so nice!'

Nelson actually blushed, but there was no hesitation in his answer.

'Your Aunt Jessie is too good for me, little Anna. I am afraid I shall die an old, old, lonely bachelor.'

'I should just like to see Aunt Jessie before I go to heaven, mamma. Do you think I shall? The ship is so slow—so slow!'

'My own darling, do not talk so!' cried Anna, bursting into tears, and taking her child in her arms.

'The ship is so slow—so slow!' Oh, how often were these words repeated during that sad and dreary voyage! How often did the melancholy mother pray for some sudden wind to waft the vessel more swiftly on its course! It was dreadful to watch the poor child becoming weaker almost daily, and to see nothing but vast ocean stretching far, far away into the still vaster sky. No trace of land anywhere; no hope of it for fifteen, twenty, long, long days and nights!

'When shall we get to England, uncle?' the wistful child would ask. 'If I go to heaven before the ship gets there, what will they do with me? Don't let them put me into the sea; let them take me to Fairfield. I don't think I could get to heaven out of the deep, deep sea.'

'O my God, if Thou wilt graciously permit us to reach home first!' became also the one prayer of the mother. 'I should die, I am sure I should die, if my child were to be committed to those roaring waves. Oh, I am punished enough for all my folly, in the death of all who are dearest to me! add not this to my cup, O gracious Lord!'

From the cabin to the deck, from the deck to the cabin, all day and night long, roamed Anna, like one bewildered, in the vain hope of seeing land. Truly she found no rest for the soles of her feet. Both crew and passengers wondered and pitied; but such were Anna's manners and appearance, that no one dared to express to her their feelings for her. Haughty and impetuous still, with flashing eyes and prouder step than of old, her grief seemed to awe rather than command instant sympathy. Nelson alone could soothe and comfort.

And he, too, was always uttering the same prayer, but in calmer words. 'Mercifully grant that she die not upon the pathless waters,' were the words of his heart almost all day long.

Anna had counted the hours of those last ten days. Two hundred and forty hours! Almost every hour that passed was struck off like a schoolboy's holiday-calendar.

'Can you see the land yet, mamma?' would be again and again the child's anxious question, until Nelson entreated her

to ask him instead of her mother, because it gave her such pain.

Never did shipwrecked mariners look for land more ardently than did those watchers.

Then came the first adverse wind; within five days' sail of England, and as good as a day lost by contrary winds. Although the captain declared that he had never before had so prosperous a voyage, and although, on her passage to India, Anna herself had been becalmed for two or three days, she thought that God had forsaken her, and was deaf to her prayers, on account of that one short delay.

It was in vain that Nelson said, 'Anna, we are all in the power of One who "holdeth the waters in the hollow of His hands," and can, if He will, engulf us all at one sudden blast.'

'Better, far better, to die so, than for her to die here, and leave me without her,' was Anna's reply.

'My brother Chatham will be so glad to see you, mammy dear,' said little Anna. 'If I am gone to heaven, he will be at Fairfield.'

'He does not know me,—he will not love me. What is all the world to you, my own darling?'

'You love me very much, mamma, and I love you dearly, dearly,—but God loves us best of all. Uncle Pynsent will see us first,' she added to Nelson; 'will he come to meet us?'

'I have no doubt he will if he can, my love.'

'Will you ask him to let me go to Fairfield?—I mean, if I do not go to heaven first,—you know what I mean.'

It was strange how the idea of Fairfield and her Aunt Jessie haunted the child.

Anna, too, was always talking of Jessie.

'If I had but Jessie with me,' she would say to Nelson, 'I do not think I should be so very, very wretched.'

'Jessie is always a consoler,' Nelson said, with that smile which he only wore when her name was mentioned; 'but there is One, Anna, who will do more for us than any earthly friend.'

'I try, Nelson, I try; but I have been so wilful, so foolish all my life, that I cannot go to Him as Jessie would; He is punishing me now for a thousand errors that only He and my own heart are conscious of. If you only knew how I have irritated and vexed the kindest and best of husbands by mere vanity, you would despise me! Yes, I am punished deservedly.'

Anna said rightly that she had frequently vexed and annoyed her husband, almost beyond endurance. Her beauty and various charms had drawn around her a crowd of admirers and worshippers in India, and, flattered and caressed, she had too

often forgotten her husband in the society of others, and had allowed her mind to rejoice in her many conquests. Chatham never for a moment ceased to love her, and her folly had pained him severely. When he seriously represented her conduct to her, she would laugh, and, in her old coaxing way, kiss him into good-humour and forgiveness. Still he felt her neglect, and could scarcely believe in her real affection for him. It was not until they parted that they were fully aware how dear they were to each other; and it was then that Anna, with the really generous openness of her character, entreated forgiveness for all her levity, assured him that there was no one in the wide world that she loved as she did him, and confessed to him that vanity was her one besetting sin, and had been ever the great stumbling-block in her path of duty.

But this last tardy confession was but a small consolation to her, when she reflected that the generous, brave, and unselfish lover and husband was now no more, and that she had been but an ungrateful and vain wife, at best, in return for all his devotion and constancy.

Through many conflicting feelings,—misery without consolation—remorse without the chance of proving her repentance—thoughts of the past without hope of the future—such grief as mothers alone can know for the treasure about to be removed—and a fear of the anger of the Almighty upon one who had been brought up in His ways, and who felt she had strayed so far from them,—Anna's voyage at last drew to a close.

It was a fine September afternoon, verging upon the evening, when our friends were, as usual, upon deck, straining their eyes towards the point where England was sure to be. The child seemed to have slightly amended, and her mother began to express hopes that, if she could but reach Fairfield alive, she might be spared to her. Nelson dared not to encourage such hopes, but strove to turn her mind towards the necessity of resignation to the dispensation of a higher Power.

'How beautiful the sun is, mamma!' said little Anna, as she gazed upon the sky; 'it looks as if it was walking down into the sea. What are they doing at Fairfield now?'

'Probably gathering in the harvest, my love.'

Nelson and Anna were side by side, and the remembrance of old harvest-homes at Fairfield suddenly shot through them both, and therewith a vision of Jessie, the presiding spirit. Nelson seemed to long to pierce through that glorious red heaven to the Fairfield beyond it, as did the child, who expressed his thought.

'If I were in the sun, I would not go down into the sea, but I

would stop at Fairfield. Ah! what is that, mamma? I see something coming between the sun and the sea,—far, far away. Is that Fairfield?'

'Land! land!' shouted a joyful voice from some other point of the ship.

'I have seen Fairfield,' said little Anna, whilst a sudden glow overspread her face; but the excitement was too much for her, and she was obliged to be taken down to the cabin.

All that night, whilst the gallant ship was making rapid progress athwart the dark waters towards that 'Land of Promise,' the well-beloved England, the child was, to all appearance, passing away. She did not speak, but lay as in a soft sleep, scarcely breathing. Oh! who shall tell the prayers of that agonized mother? Should her child die within sight of land,—within a few hours' sail of her brother's home!

No; those prayers were heard. Even whilst she knelt by her child's couch, and seemed to await her last breath, Nelson, who had been pacing half the weary night through upon deck, came to tell her that they were sailing on the Thames, and would soon be in the docks.

'Thank God!' was all she said, as she burst into a flood of tears.

The child was aroused, and understood that all was right.

'Don't cry, mamma; we are come to Fairfield,' she murmured.

They wrapped her in shawls and cloaks, and carried her upon deck. Way was instantly made for this precious burden, that crew and passengers had so long contemplated with pity, and Nelson was amongst the first to touch land, followed closely by Anna and the nurse bearing the child.

He looked round in search of Pynsent. Whose was the anxious face that suddenly met his from amongst the crowd?—A lady standing by a gentleman.

'There she is!' said the gentleman; but the lady still looked at Nelson.

'Nelson!' 'Jessie!' were soon the exclamations of the pair, succeeded by, 'Here you are, Anna!' 'Pynsent! I am so thankful!' from the brother and sister.

Jessie and Anna were once more in each other's arms, but only for a moment.

'Take her, Jessie, she is dying!' were Anna's first words, as she took little Anna from the nurse and laid her slight form in Jessie's arms. 'It is Aunt Jessie, darling,' she added to the child.

'Oh, my aunt!' said the little one, as she made an effort to put her arms round her neck. 'Then we are come to Fairfield.'

She scarcely opened her eyes, but was in a dreamy state of half-unconsciousness.

Pynsent had a carriage waiting, into which he put Anna, Jessie, and the nurse and child, and ordered them at once to Duke Street. Jessie and Nelson had not even shaken hands; all thought was for the child.

Little Anna was soon laid in the comfortable bed prepared for her and her mother. It was in vain for Jessie to entreat her sister to take off her travelling dress, and make herself comfortable; as long as the little girl was talking incoherently of being at Fairfield, she could not be prevailed upon to quit her bedside.

'Is this Aunt Jessie?' asked the child, as Jessie bent over her to arrange her pillows. 'May I see the pigeons? Where is my brother?'

'You must try to sleep first, darling; you cannot see anything until you have slept.'

'Will you stay here, and mamma, and uncle?—Uncle Nelson, I mean.'

'We will all be with you, my love, only try to sleep.'

'I will,—kiss me first; and mamma, kiss me first, and I will say Uncle Nelson's prayer: "O Lord, take care of Thy little child, and make me fit for heaven, for Christ's sake." Now will you say, "Our Father"?'

Little Anna put her hands together, and, as Jessie knelt down and said the Lord's Prayer, her lips moved.

'Good-night, mammy dear. Good-night, Aunt Jessie.' And in a few minutes the poor exhausted child was asleep.

As usual, a nurse! Why was there always sickness where Jessie was? Seated by the slumbering child, whilst her sister went to lie down on the sofa in the next room, Jessie had time to think over the last few bewildering hours. But about midnight she was aroused from her meditations by the wandering words of little Anna. She seemed to be either dreaming, or pursuing the train of thought begun in a dream.

'What pretty flowers! Let me see the harvest-home, mamma. Aunt Jessie, may I feed the pigeons? Where are all the rest? I want to see little brother and Uncle Pynsent.'

Jessie, perceiving that she was awake, rang the bell for her brother, and went still nearer to her. She put out her hand.

'Fairfield is very pretty; it must be like heaven.'

Here Pynsent came.

'Here is Uncle Pynsent, my love,' said Jessie.

The child smiled. Pynsent felt her pulse, and looked stedfastly into her eyes.

'You had better call Anna,' he said. 'She is sinking. I will get her something to take, but this cannot last.'

'Where is Uncle Nelson?' asked the sufferer.

'I will bring him,' replied Pynsent gently.

He went into the drawing-room, where Anna was asleep on the sofa.

'Anna,' he said, gently awaking her, 'I am afraid your little one is worse. She has just awoke, and perhaps you had better go to her. It seems a great mercy that she should be permitted to come here, does it not, my dear sister?'

'I know—I know what you mean!' shrieked Anna. 'She is dying—she cannot be saved!'

'Hush, Anna! All depends on her being kept quiet, and having no excitement.'

Anna threw herself for a moment on her brother's neck.

'Oh, Pynsent, pity me! I am so wretched—so wretched! Lonely, lonely, heart-broken!'

'My own Anna, my dear sister,' he said lovingly, 'remember you have brothers and a sister and a beautiful child still left you.'

'Mamma, my own mamma!' was heard through the folding-doors.

Anna went to her, and Pynsent went down-stairs, whence he returned with a soothing draught, and accompanied by Nelson.

Jessie had been giving little Anna food, and was seated on the bed, supporting her in her arms.

Anna was kneeling on the other side.

'Uncle,' said the child to Nelson, 'I have got Aunt Jessie, and I shall go to heaven from Fairfield. Will you tell me about the little children and Jesus Christ?'

Nelson went to the head of the bed, opposite Jessie, and, bending over the child, said slowly, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'

'Mamma, may I go to Jesus Christ?' said little Anna to her mother, whose hand she held, and who in reply could only bury her face in the bedclothes to check her sobs.

Nelson went on gently whispering to the child of the love of Christ for His children, His tender lambs; and she, with a quiet smile, leaned back on Jessie's shoulder, and fell asleep. Was it sleep or death? They could not tell. Nelson helped to support her; and thus, between Jessie and him, Anna's child went away from this world, and was borne by angels to Him who 'gathereth the lambs in His arms.'

CHAPTER XLI.

'How still and peaceful is the grave,
Where, life's vain tumults past,
The appointed house, by Heaven's decree,
Receives us all at last!

'The wicked there from troubling cease,
Their passions rage no more;
And there the weary pilgrim rests
From all the toils he bore.'—LOGAN.

MR. MICHELSON has returned once more to the Hall. He is again pacing the large dining-room, and looks morose and unhappy. A report has reached him that his son is dead, and that his widow has arrived at Fairfield, accompanying the remains of her little child, his grandchild.

Did Mr. Michelson care for his son? It is a difficult question to answer. He certainly cared little for him when living, but now that he is dead, he would give much to recall him to life. Age, as it will do in spite of our best efforts, is creeping on Mr. Michelson. There are wrinkles around his eyes and mouth; his hair is grey, his gait less erect. Since that sudden attack in the Royal Academy, he has a less assured step; and as he walks impatiently up and down the room, a nervous halt is perceptible. Worse than all this, he is alone in the world. Ah! there is the secret of his uneasiness. Selfishness is at the root. He knows that the friends who have flattered him, the arts that he has patronized, the paintings and statues he has collected, the property he is master of, will stand him in small stead when the paralysis that is haunting him like a spectre, shall come upon him, and perhaps chain him to one spot, a helpless being for the remainder of his life. He feels a pain and tension in one sinew of his right side, that makes him stamp on the floor with impotent anger as he moves to and fro. He knows that he parted from his only son in wrath; that he never did his duty by him; that he was jealous of him, and glad of any excuse to renounce him;—and now that it is too late, he wishes that he had treated him more kindly, so as to have the remembrance, at least, of having seen him last in peace. He suddenly glances up, and sees that he is facing the picture of a tall, pale lady: it is the portrait of his wife. The melancholy face looks reproachfully at him, and seems to say, 'You have killed me, and ruined my child.' He cannot bear that mute rebuke, so he walks into the hall impatiently, and thence into the drawing-room. There have

been hung, in conspicuous positions, the pictures he last purchased, 'Sedgemoor after the Fight,' and 'Lear and Cordelia.' The first object he sees is the pale and sweet Cordelia bending over the kneeling father. Oh, that face, which haunts him in his dreams! He turns from it, and sees the young child on the battlefield, kneeling by her dead parent. Everywhere filial tenderness! How did he ever strive to gain the affection of *his* child, so as to demand a return of love for love? Whose love had he ever won? Yes, there was one who had loved him; where was she? Again he turns with an air of terror to the Cordelia. It seems that the second look is even more trying than the first, for he puts his hand on his forehead, and hurries out of the room. His house has become haunted: he has not been here a week, and he cannot remain.

He walks into the shrubbery, and there falls on his ear the heavy toll of the death-bell from the little church; it has been sounding sadly all the morning, at regular intervals of a minute, but he has been hitherto so wrapped in his own reflections that he has not heard it. At the end of the path in which he is now walking, there is a small iron gate between the shrubbery and churchyard. He pursues his way towards it, thoughtlessly, the heavy knell sounding forth again as he reaches it. He pauses, and looks into the churchyard. The venerable church seems to reproach him for time misspent; the toll of the bell sinks into his heart like lead; yet the scene is cheerful. The bright autumn sun is drawing the few remaining dewdrops from the quiet graves, and glancing through the thick yew trees; beyond, the wood is turning red and yellow in its change from youth to age, and the sun is sporting on its mellow face. There are human objects of interest, also, in the graveyard: young children, seated upon the wall, and lounging on the gate, looking towards the road without, as if in expectation of something; the sexton, with a grave face, spade in hand; the clerk, suddenly emerging from the porch, reconnoitring, and again disappearing within the church. Mr. Michelson's glance follows the sexton, as he walks towards the weeping willow that falls over the tomb of many generations of Burtons. He sees that the iron railings and the vault are both opened, and he remembers that the remains of his little grandchild have been brought to Fairfield, and are probably about to be interred. Suddenly there is a movement amongst the children; the clerk appears and disappears; and immediately the clergyman, in his white surplice, walks towards the churchyard gate. Mr. Michelson feels impelled to remain, he knows not why. He buries himself amongst the shrubs, almost close to the open vault, where he can see

without being seen, and, unknown to all, attends his grandchild's funeral. He almost fancies that it must be his son's, his heart beats so convulsively, and his knees tremble so much. The sound of many wheels, slow and heavy, is heard coming up the road. He cannot see the carriages, but in a few minutes he sees, above the churchyard wall, six bunches of nodding white plumes, surmounting the black top of a hearse. Anon the hearse disappears, and a mourning-coach replaces it, then two carriages; the rest does not come near enough to be visible to him.

'I am the resurrection and the life,' strikes upon his ear, as the priest turns and walks slowly up the path to the village church. Is it a funeral or a bridal that follows him? Six young girls, dressed in white, with white silk hoods and scarfs, bearing some silken and glistening thing between them, move up the path. Surely, the grandsire's heart whispers, death never looked like that! There can be no black coffin under so white a pall! Look again, old man, and you will see. A tall lady, in the deepest of weeds, leaning on a gentleman, who can scarcely support her: that heart whispers again, the mother and her brother. Another lady and a little boy. Oh! the tell-tale heart; it recognises for the first time a grandson in the child who walks, with a timid step, by the side of his aunt. The next sombre pair it does not know,—the artist and his young wife; then those two brothers, whose presence is a mute reproach,—men of his own age, who have followed their grandniece, his grandchild, to her early grave, whilst he is hiding like a culprit, and watching. Uncle Timothy leans on his brother, and both grieve more for the living mother than for the child in heaven. Another painful throb; oh, heart, feeling at last! Captain Burford leans on the arm of his son, whom he has been allowed to welcome back from that Indian warfare in love and honour; whilst *his* only child, fallen in the same strife, knew that his parent would shed no tears over his fate. Even the tears of the black nurse, and the grave, sorrowful air of her fellow-servant, reprove the worldly man, who was never known to weep for dead or living. The very servants and labourers that close the sad procession wear decent mourning clothes and melancholy faces; whilst he, the father and grandfather, does not mingle amongst the mourners, who are about to commit a Michelson to the tomb of the Burtons.

The little coffin, its bearers and attendant mourners, are now in the church, where the priest is reading the solemn and beautiful Burial Service. Mr. Michelson is still rooted amongst those evergreens, as if he could not move from the spot; once

or twice he makes an effort to go away, but some power, stronger than himself, restrains him. Oh, what a world of thoughts rush through his mind during the short space that elapses before the funeral train issues from the church! The conscience of the strong bad man is awakened, and, like Adam in Paradise, he knows not where to flee to hide from the anger that he knows he has deserved.

Again the six white figures appear, bearing the gleaming pall; again the dark procession is formed behind. As they approach the grave, the strong heart beats more and more; the words of the man of God thrill through it: 'In the midst of life we are in death; of whom may we seek for succour but of Thee, O Lord, who for our sins art justly displeased?' Why cannot the heart abase itself, and utter those words humbly?

Oh, the smothered sob that bursts from the mother, as she leans over the vault as her child is lowered into it! deeper and deeper, audible and more audible, as the falling earth echoes upon the coffin. Parted now, for ever in this world! Mr. Michelson cannot bear it; he covers his face with his hands, and they are moistened—with what? can it be a tear? God grant it! for is not a tear the first oblation of the penitent?

Every word of the concluding portion of the service sinks into that awakened heart with power. The hope of resurrection,—the joy of those who die in the Lord,—the prayers for the conversion of the living,—the belief in Christ the Saviour, and the concluding blessing;—all make an impression that has never before been made. He finds himself repeating the words of the priest, and joining aloud in the last 'Amen,' when a shriek, suppressed till now, breaks on his ear, and he sees Anna fall, insensible, into the arms of her brother. There is an immediate movement amongst the mourners, who surround the unhappy mother. Pynsent's face is ashy pale, as he motions them away, and whispers to his uncle. Mr. Michelson thinks there must be something worse than a mere fainting fit, as the clergyman and clerk look equally alarmed, and all appear to be horrified, and for the moment stunned, by the occurrence. White handkerchiefs, already saturated with tears, are presented to Pynsent, and in a few seconds Mr. Michelson sees one covered with blood, and hears the words, 'It would be death to take her home.'

It is the impulse of the moment,—for once a Heaven-inspired one, where delay or thought might be ruin,—Mr. Michelson is in the midst of the terrified group.

'Follow me, follow me! Come to my house; bring her to the Hall,' he exclaims, in a manner so authoritative that not even Pynsent resists.

Impelled by the movement and action, they all follow Mr. Michelson instinctively, as he assists Pynsent in supporting Anna, and leads the way through the shrubbery. Mr. Michelson looks upon the face of her whom he had last seen in all the brightness of youth and beauty, in the very house to which he is now bearing her. This is her second visit to her husband's natural home.

'What is it?' he asks of Pynsent in a hollow voice.

'She has burst a blood-vessel. She would attend her child's funeral, and this is the consequence of the violent outburst of long-controlled agony.'

They reached the door. Mr. Michelson rings violently.

'Send the housekeeper to my room, and show the rest to the drawing-room,' he says, as a servant appears.

'Up-stairs at once, I suppose?' he asks of Pynsent.

'Thank you, it will be best.'

They carry their lifeless burden up the broad staircase to the corridor.

'My room is the only one ready,' says Mr. Michelson.

They take her to a magnificent apartment, and lay her on the bed. Uncle Timothy, slightly aided by Tiny and Jessie, enters after them. The housekeeper appears.

'See that everything is done, instantly, for the relief of this lady,' says Mr. Michelson. 'Miss Burton, you will consider this house entirely at the service of your sister and her friends,' he adds, addressing Jessie, whom he recognises now that her veil is withdrawn.

Tears gush from Jessie's eyes; she cannot speak, but she holds out her hand in token of gratitude. Mr. Michelson takes it, and for the first time there is sympathy between those two most adverse natures, thanks to the power of human kindness.

Mr. Michelson is about to leave the room, and glances once more at the bed.—Whom does he see holding a handkerchief to the lips of Anna?—The original of his Cordelia! the fair, sad face that has haunted him day and night! Tiny's bonnet is thrown off, and, as she leans over Anna, her attitude and expression are those of the picture. Mr. Michelson staggers out of the room, and a sudden giddiness comes over him; he holds by the banisters, and happily recovers himself.

Half-way up the stairs stands, in uncertainty, a child. He sees Mr. Michelson, and with a bold, straightforward air advances towards him. Grandfather and grandchild face each other for the second time in their lives.

'How is my mamma? and where is Aunt Jessie?' asks the boy quickly.

'Come here, and I will tell you,' replies Mr. Michelson, opening the door of a dressing-room. Pale and exhausted, he sits down to recover himself.

'You said you would tell me how my mamma is, and where my Aunt Jessie is,' repeated the child, standing in the doorway.

'Your mamma is very ill, and your aunt is with her.'

'Will it make aunty sick to see mamma bleeding so?' asked the child, turning pale.

'No, certainly not. Come here, sir. What is your name?'

'I shan't tell you,—I don't like you.'

'Why do you not like me?'

'Because you don't like my papa and mamma, and turned them out of your house.'

'Who told *you* that, sir?' Mr. Michelson's pale face grew crimson.

'Dinah said so, and old Will; and they said I ought to have Michelson Hall some day, if I had my due.' The handsome black eyes of the boy seemed to flash through the old man.

'Did any one else—did your uncles or aunts—tell you the same?'

'No; but I heard Aunt Betsey tell Uncle James once that it was a shame you did nothing for me. But I don't want any one to do for me. Aunt Jessie is my real mamma and papa both,—Captain Burford says so; only now my other mamma is come from India, and I love her too.'

'How did you know me? When did you see me?'

'I never saw you before, but I heard them call you Mr. Michelson just now, and you are my grandfather.'

'And you cannot like your grandfather?' Mr. Michelson's voice trembled; the boy perceived it, and grew less bold.

'I don't know;—I don't like any one who hates my papa and mamma and Aunt Jessie.'

'But supposing I did not hate them?'

'Will you promise not to hurt my mamma and Aunt Jessie, or turn them out of your house?'

'Yes; they are going to stay here until your mamma is better.'

'But my poor papa, that they say is dead over in India,—you hate him. Do you know Aunt Jessie says that the Bible tells us not to hate any one, not even our enemies?'

'But you hate me, sir?'

'No, I don't hate you; but I don't like you. If you will try to love my papa, I will try to love you. I should like to go and fight all those Indians, and kill them, for killing my papa. Will you love my papa?'

'Would to God I had loved him when he was able to return my love!'

Mr. Michelson groaned aloud, and covered his face with his hands.

The boy left his post in the doorway and went towards him. He looked at him for a few moments, then, gently touching his hands, said,—

'Don't cry, please don't. If you are sorry, Aunt Jessie says,—really sorry,—God will forgive you. And I will love you, because you don't hate my papa and mamma any longer. And perhaps my papa may come back. Colonel Burford says that it is not certain that the Indians killed him; I heard him say so. Do you know, Colonel Burford has only one arm? And he has the sleeve of his coat buttoned up, just like the picture of Lord Nelson, and it looks so funny!'

This transition, from his son's death to Colonel Burford's one arm, made Mr. Michelson smile. He looked at the boy; he was very like Chatham,—the same fine open face and attractive manner.

'Then you will try not to hate your grandfather?'

Mr. Michelson put out his hand. The boy still hesitated.

'You did not say you would love my papa and mamma. You only said you wished you had loved them.'

'I will try, little boy, I will try.'

'Then I will try to love you.'

The child put his hand into his grandfather's, who drew him towards him, put his other hand on his head, and let fall a genuine tear.

'Now I will tell you what my name is,' said the child, with a sudden start: 'it is Pynsent Chatham Michelson; but they call me Chatham, because it was my papa's name.'

'Will you come and live with me?'

'No, I cannot go away from Aunt Jessie; but I will come and see you, if she will let me.'

The door of the room was suddenly opened, and a servant appeared.

'I beg your pardon, sir,' he said, 'but we do not know whether we are to prepare luncheon; and James wants to know what horse he is to ride.'

'Of course you will prepare luncheon, and let James ride the fastest horse. Are you a set of fools, that you can do nothing without directions?'

Mr. Michelson was recalled to his position as master of the house, and, taking little Chatham by the hand, went down-stairs. He saw the different carriages waiting at the door. The mourn-

ing coach had been sent away. All the house was in confusion. Servants were bustling about, and the groom was just starting for medicine. Captain Burford and Uncle James were impatiently pacing the hall, waiting for intelligence. Nelson and Charles were in the drawing-room. Captain Burford touched Uncle James, as he saw Mr. Michelson coming down-stairs, leading Chatham. 'Wonders will never cease,' he muttered.

'This is very good of you, Michelson,' said Captain Burford, as he shook Mr. Michelson's hand with all his heart. 'Confound it! if it had only been under more happy circumstances, this is just as it should be. That poor girl was half dead before she started; but hang it! she has the old spirit in her still, and she would follow her child, say what we would. Of course this brought the other women, who are all better out of the way at such a time.'

'We were waiting to thank you, Mr. Michelson,' said Uncle James in a trembling voice, 'before we took our leave.'

'Do not think of going until we hear she is better,' said Mr. Michelson.

'My wife will be uneasy,' said Uncle James.

'Oh, Aunt Betsey will survive it!' growled the Captain; 'besides, she has Mrs. Colville and Mrs. Egerton with her. I told old Will to go and tell them what had happened.'

Mr. Michelson rang the bell.

'Put up the horses for the present,' he said to the servant; and the carriages drove off.

Pynsent appeared from up-stairs, looking very pale.

'Is the man gone?' he asked. 'We can do nothing until the remedies come.'

He came down-stairs, and found himself opposite Mr. Michelson. Each had a decided natural antipathy for the other; neither knew what to say.

'I am much obliged to you,' began Pynsent in measured terms, 'for your kindness. I scarcely know when my sister may be able to remove with safety: she is very dangerously ill. Still, we cannot trespass'—

'I beg, sir, you will not name the subject,' interrupted Mr. Michelson majestically. 'I have to thank you, also, for a favour done me when I was taken ill in the Royal Academy; perhaps you will allow me to return it in kind.'

'There! there!' broke in Captain Burford. 'Let bygones be bygones; shake hands and be friends.'

The worthy Captain's well-meant interference only increased the stiffness, and he walked into the drawing-room, muttering 'Pshaw!' and shortly after consoling himself with his favourite

aphorism, 'Twill be all the same a hundred years hence, I suppose.'

Nelson and Charles appeared.

'How is Anna?—how is she?' they asked simultaneously.

'She is very ill. She is recovering consciousness, but the bleeding continues; we are afraid it will prove from the lungs.'

'I beg, sir,' said Mr. Michelson, 'that you will consider this house as the home of—of—my—my son's wife,' making an effort to speak calmly. 'As such, there can be no objection to her remaining.'

'Thank you, sir,' said Pynsent frankly. 'Now I can gladly offer the right hand of fellowship, if you will allow me, and accept willingly of all your hospitality.'

He waited for Mr. Michelson to make the advance, but still the right hands did not join.

'Won't you shake hands with my Uncle Pynsent?' here interrupted little Chatham; 'then I won't love you any more;' and he immediately walked over to his uncle.

Every one smiled involuntarily at the air of pride and importance assumed by the boy; still it had its effect. Mr. Michelson held out his hand, and the heads of the adverse houses of Michelson and Burton were, to all appearance, reconciled.

Pynsent returned at once to Anna. The rest, full of anxiety, went into the drawing-room. Conversation flagged; in spite of the attempt at cordiality, the ice was not thawed. It takes almost as long to melt two masses of human pride as two of the northern icebergs. Uncle James, moreover, was still slightly jealous; and a dreadful vision of Mr. Michelson, the enslaver, making himself agreeable to Aunt Betsey, the enslaved, came between him and friendship.

At last Mr. Michelson and Charles got into a genuine discussion on painting. They were not unfeeling, but people must talk of something when even life is at stake; and Mr. Michelson's feelings, not being so deeply interested in Anna as to preclude his thinking of other matters, he introduced the subject most agreeable to himself and dearest to Charles. They had gone through much of the art gossip of the year before Mr. Michelson ventured to introduce the point he had been aiming at from the first.

'It was strange that I should have purchased your pictures without knowing that the artist was a near neighbour until afterwards,' he began.

Charles bowed.

'I confess I was first taken by the female figures in each picture. It is universally acknowledged by rivals and amateurs

that your Cordelia is the finest impersonation of Shakespeare's idea ever painted.'

'It is a portrait,' said Charles, colouring with pleasure, 'and owes whatever merit it may have to the original.'

'May I ask who the original was?' asked Mr. Michelson.

'She is my wife,' said Charles proudly, 'and herself painted the head of King Lear.'

'She must be a wonderful creature,' said Mr. Michelson, feeling that here he could probe no further. 'And the child?' pointing to the picture of the battle. 'I seem to recognise her. Is that also a portrait?'

'You may remember a little girl you once saw at Fairfield, and afterwards picked up on the ice in the moor, many years ago? It was taken at that period, and your memory probably recalled the face.'

'And the child and woman,—are they identical?'

'Yes; I used to delight in sketching Tiny when a child, and reproduced my early ideal in my first exhibited picture.'

'There is some one I have seen so like that picture.'

'My sister always says that Tiny is like a lady who once lived with you. I think her name was Rutherford.

'Ah! yes! perhaps so.' Again that fearful pang at Mr. Michelson's heart, and the accompanying threat of paralysis.

Charles saw his countenance change.

'I fear you are not well?' he said kindly. 'Allow me to assist you.'

Mr. Michelson rose with difficulty, but the spasm passed away. The interruption changed the conversation, and Mr. Michelson proposed luncheon, to which they all adjourned, more by way of something to do than of satisfying appetites, which were truly anything but craving.

CHAPTER XLII.

'Go, let me weep! there's bliss in tears,
When he who sheds them only feels
Some lingering stain of early years
Effaced by every drop that steals.
The fruitless showers of worldly woe
Fall dark to earth, and never rise;
While tears that from repentance flow
In bright exhalement reach the skies.'—MOORE.

IT is now time to take a look at Anna. The climax of her fate seems to have arrived, and a very slender thread holds the frail fabric of her life together. She has recovered consciousness, but is too weak to speak; her face is so pale, and her features are so suddenly contracted, that you would not know her. What will be the result of the effusion of her life's blood, God only knows; but there is nothing so dreadful to witness, in all the dreadful diseases to which human nature is subject, as this slow flowing and ebbing forth, so to say, of life itself. Jessie has seen much of illness in every form, but this appears to her the worst of all that she has ever witnessed.

But we will not linger over the horrors of such a sight. Before night the bleeding had ceased, and it only remained to discover whence it proceeded. The pulse was becoming rather more regular, and the face less death-like; there was no longer cause for immediate alarm; she was not dying. This was all that either uncle or nephew could venture to say to the anxious friends who were awaiting their fiat.

It was necessary to come to some decision as to who should remain at the Hall, and who should leave. Pynsent resolved upon sitting up the whole night to watch the symptoms. He was to have returned to London the following day, but he could not desert his sister in her hour of trouble. Anna found the rough, sarcastic brother, whom she had rather feared than loved, the tenderest of friends when she was in real distress. Uncle Timothy could not be persuaded to leave Anna; he went himself to Mr. Michelson, and, apologizing for the trouble he should give, said,—

'My nephew will, I hope, be able to go back to his own duties in London in the course of a day or two. I shall then wish, if you have no objection, to be with Anna entirely, as she will require the most constant care and watching. I feel how much we are intruding, but if we can save her'—

'Yes, save her, for God's sake!' said Mr. Michelson. 'This

house is at your service; I may go away in a day or two, and then it will be wholly free.'

Behind Uncle Timothy stood Tiny, who had led him down the strange staircase. Mr. Michelson bent to her politely, as to a stranger, and she returned the inclination.

'I should like to see Jessie before we leave,' said Captain Burford to Uncle Timothy. 'Of course she will be head nurse; she always is, God bless her! And you, Tiny?'

'Pynsent and Jessie think I had better go home,' said Tiny timidly. 'Jessie says the housekeeper is so kind that she shall want no help; and we are so many'—

'I hope you will stay if you wish it,' said Mr. Michelson, looking at Tiny, and suddenly meeting her eyes. Oh, the expression of those eyes, and the pang at his heart!

'May I come again, then?' asked Tiny eagerly.

'As you like—when you like,' said Mr. Michelson, turning away.

She led Uncle Timothy up-stairs again, and, after opening the door for them, Mr. Michelson went into the hall, and watched her as she ascended the staircase, guiding the steps of her kind guardian and protector. Again the pang shot through his heart.

Jessie came down immediately.

'Jessie, my dear, Nelson says that he has not seen you once since you all came back together to Fairfield.'

'No, Captain Burford; Nelson has not been to Fairfield.'

'He did not like to come at such a time, my dear. Ah, Jessie, he is all that a father could wish!'

Jessie blushed, knowing the good Captain's weak point, even at such a time.

'Did you want me?' she asked.

Here Nelson came into the room with little Chatham, who had been entertaining him with various family histories. He held out his hand to Jessie, with the old, old smile that she had not seen for so many years.

'Jessie, you must not be too anxious,' he said. 'You must not injure your own health by over-watching and nursing. What should we all do if you were ill?'

This was said very naturally, and literally meant nothing more than the mere words might convey; still ther was the manner and voice of years ago, that spoke more directly to Jessie's heart than any words could have done. She looked at him with those truthful eyes that he knew so well, and received a kind, old-fashioned smile in return. They understood one another: all was as it used to be.

Captain Burford was watching them, and he suddenly began to rub his hands with an alacrity that startled everybody. Jessie turned to say a few words to Uncle James, and was going upstairs, when little Chatham came forward with,—

'Well, aunty, may I stay with you?'

'No, dear; you must go home with Aunt Tiny, and take care of the farm.'

He knew it was useless to resist, so he crept round to Mr. Michelson, who at once took his hand, and said, 'This little fellow must be my companion and my property *now*, if you will allow him.'

There was an emphasis on the 'now' that everybody understood. It was as much as to say, 'Now that his son was gone.'

'You are not angry, aunty?' cried the child.

'No, no, love. Stay, and be good to this gentleman,' she replied.

She took him by the hand, and led him to his grandfather.

'I thank God, sir, that you see the right. May he be a blessing to you, and gain and deserve your love!'

As she smiled through her tears, such a radiance was in her eyes as had never shone there before.

'You are a wonderful young woman,' said Mr. Michelson involuntarily, as Jessie hurried away.

'You are right!' exclaimed Captain Burford, seizing his hand, and shaking it ecstatically. 'Brothers, sister, and uncles have had reason to bless the light of her sweet face for many years, and now a new generation has to do the same. Don't you love your aunt, Chatham?'

'Dearly! best of all!' cried the boy.

'And God knows, so do I,' said the good Captain.

If any film still covered Nelson's eyes, it fell off now, and never gathered again.

The carriages came round, and Mr. Michelson watched Captain Burford and Nelson drive off in one, and saw Uncle James, Charles, and Tiny into the other. Tiny put out her hand timidly, and the proud man took it, looked into her eyes, and again the pang shot through his heart.

He was thankful to be alone,—thankful that all the unusual excitement was over. He shut himself into his library, forgetful of little Chatham, and of all external things. Again a tide of remorse swept over him. The very sight of that family love which he had just witnessed added to his pain. He had no one to love or care for him, and he deserved to be hated and despised. He had never thought of any one but self during his long life, and now he had only self to care for self. On the

contrary, a simple country girl, who had all her life forgotten self in her desire to do her duty to others, was blessed with the love and respect of all who knew her. He began to wish that the impulse of nature had not been so strong within him at the funeral, as to have induced him to ask them all to his house. He could not but continue to hate people who were a perpetual reproach to him;—who had loved his son,—brought up his grandson,—lived respectably on the tithe of a fortune that he had squandered on trifles;—and, finally, gladly accepted such advances as he had made towards a reconciliation. And through every reflection, every thought, came that beautiful young wife,—the artist-genius, whom under other circumstances he would have courted and flattered, but at whom he now dared scarcely look, she was so like one whom he had wronged.

His reflections were interrupted by a knock at the door. His hasty interjection, nearly approaching to an oath, sank into a growling 'Who's there?'

'It's me, grandpapa. May I come in? I don't like being alone in this great house.'

Mr. Michelson admitted his little grandson with as much readiness as he could assume.

'If I may have a book,' said the child, looking round the well-filled library, 'I won't talk, and then I shan't trouble you; but it was so lonely in that big room in the dark, with those pictures looking at me; I thought they were making faces, and I got frightened.'

'No,' said Mr. Michelson, rousing himself; 'you must talk to me. There is a little stool; bring it to the fire, and tell me all about your life at Fairfield.'

The boy was soon deep in the histories of great-uncles and aunts, horses, cows, pigeons, and poultry. Insensibly his grandfather forgot himself in this new interest, and found himself really listening to the descriptions of country life and manners as exhibited at Fairfield. He began to wonder whether he could ever bring himself to live in one place, and to make occupation and amusement out of surrounding objects; and by degrees his mood softened, and he felt, he knew not how, a better man.

By and by the housekeeper came with a message from Miss Burton, to say that, if Mr. Michelson had no objection, Master Chatham had better have his supper and go to bed.

'Bring it here, then,' said Mr. Michelson.

'May I sleep with you, grandpapa? I don't like to be quite alone in this big house.'

'I hope you are not a coward, sir?'

'I am a soldier's son!' said the boy, drawing himself up; 'and

I could fight any one in the day; but I never was anywhere but at Fairfield before.'

'Have the dressing-room made ready for this young gentleman, next to the east room prepared for me,' said Mr. Michelson, as the housekeeper was leaving the room.

It was something for a man who had not eaten with an appetite for months, to watch the boy eat his supper of bread and milk. When it was concluded, he got down, and very solemnly thanked God for his meal. Then he asked if he might go to his aunt; and when informed that she must not be taken from his mamma, he said, 'Then may I say my prayers to you? I sometimes say them to Uncle Timothy, when aunty is very, very busy.'

Mr. Michelson neither said yes nor no, but as he saw Chatham pause for an answer, he made a slight movement, which was taken for consent, and the boy knelt down at his grandfather's knees. There was nothing remarkable in this. The action was not without its effect on Mr. Michelson. As he looked down on the curly black head of the boy, he remembered a time when he had suddenly entered that same room years ago, and seen his son kneeling at his mother's feet; and he remembered how his pale, patient wife had started when he thus surprised her, and had flushed with sudden colour when he, by some, to him, unnatural impulse, had kissed her, and put his hand on his child's head. Why did all these long-banished memories crowd upon him at this time? He could not tell; but they came uncalled, and would not be dismissed.

When Chatham had ended his simple prayers, his grandfather put his arm round him and kissed him. The child looked pleased, and said, 'You love me now, grandpapa? I shall tell old Will and Dinah and Aunt Betsey that you are very good and kind, and that you are to live at the Hall always.'

'Can you tell me, little Chatham, who that lady was before she married your Uncle Charles, whom they call Tiny?'

'No; but I don't think she has any papa or mamma, any more than Aunt Jessie.'

'Did you never hear them talk about her at Fairfield?'

'I heard Dinah say to Molly, the dairymaid, that nobody knew who she was, and that she was not half good enough for Uncle Charles. But indeed she is very good; and don't you think she is very pretty?'

'Did they like your Uncle Charles to marry her?'

'Aunt Betsey did not. I heard her scold Aunt Jessie about it once; but aunty sent me out of the room. Do you know,

Aunt Betsey is very proud,—Dinah says so,—and I don't like her very much.'

The housekeeper came to take Master Chatham to bed, and thus ended the queries concerning Tiny, from the answers to which Mr. Michelson did not gain much satisfaction. He, however, sat long that night pondering over the events of the day, but what conclusions he came to it would be difficult to say, since he went to bed in a most unsettled state of mind,—a mind softened, it is true, but not purified from the immense amount of worldliness and selfishness it contained.

Meanwhile the night passed wearily and anxiously to the watchers up-stairs. In due course of time Uncle Timothy was prevailed upon to go to bed, and Pynsent and Jessie were left alone with their exhausted sister. It was a long time since they had met, and now their meeting was most painful.

Anna had looked weak and ill that morning, when she followed her child to the grave; but what was her weakness then to what it is now? She lies with one arm outside the bed, and the hand looks as white as the sheet on which it rests; whilst her face is perfectly colourless. She is too weak to make any effort, mentally or bodily. They administer either nourishment or medicine every quarter of an hour, and she swallows it unconsciously. Pynsent has taken his place by that death-like hand, where his uncle sat so long, and feels the pulse frequently. His skill alone would make him conscious of a pulse; that sign of continuing life would not appear to an uninitiated touch; but Pynsent thanks God and takes courage, for its faint throb is just perceptible to him.

Thus wanes the night. Jessie, moving to and fro by the faint light of a lamp, looks like a spectre. Now and then she pauses by the side of Pynsent, and whispers the oft-repeated question, 'Is it stronger?'—to which Pynsent can only reply by a melancholy shake of the head; then Jessie sits down in the large arm-chair, and prays silently.

At last the first faint rays of the autumn sun pierce the window-curtains, and with them creeps in the housekeeper, followed shortly after by Uncle Timothy. About the same moment the faint, distant sound of a bell is heard. Slight as it is, they fear lest it should startle Anna. She uncloses her eyes, but quickly falls back again into unconsciousness.

'She is better,' whispers Uncle Timothy. 'The pulse is a shade stronger.'

'Now, ma'am,' says the housekeeper to Jessie, 'you must lie down for an hour or two.'

'Yes,' says Pynsent. 'You will want all your strength, and you must not exhaust it at the beginning.'

Jessie yielded, and, as she was leaving the room, was met by Mr. Michelson's valet, with his master's inquiries for Mrs. Michelson. She said she hoped she was a little better. The housekeeper conducted her to a bedroom, and she lay down. Exhausted by a week of harass and wretchedness, she soon slept, but awoke in a few hours, to return again to her post, refreshed, and prepared for another day and night of watching.

Three or four such days and nights gradually gave Anna some degree of strength, and enabled her doctors to say that there was no present danger of any return of the bleeding from the lungs; for they had by this time too surely discovered from whence it came. The fear was now that this dangerous attack, preceded as it had been by months of excitement and fatigue, might terminate in consumption. She still continued too weak to talk, but recognised and smiled upon those about her, as if she was conscious of her situation. It was sad to witness the gradual return of memory, with some small portion of physical power. It was visible in the melancholy expression of her eyes, and the quiet tears that constantly flowed down her cheeks, and that no one tried to repress.

Could we look into the bewildered mind, it would be sadder still. First came the questions, 'Where am I? What am I?' put to self, much as an infant, if he have reasoning powers, must put it, when he first opens his eyes upon the light. Then flocked in odd dreamy recollections of childhood, and the woman Anna was again playing amid the fields and gardens of Fairfield. Anon confused memories of brothers, sisters, friends, and companions floated about, indistinct, but real. It was long before she advanced to more mature years, and dreams of Indian days rushed through her mind. But here, too, were children: those two beloved ones that she had left behind her in their foreign graves lived again, and, together with her husband, played before her. Dancing in, came that last and dearest, the little Anna, so spiritual and shadowy that she could not clasp her. Mingling with each and all, glided in Nelson, grave, and with that strange hanging sleeve; and Jessie, looking so calm and sweet, with those few slight threads of silver hair that the young ones seemed to try to pluck out: and so, for hours, and even days, these dear ones intertwined and succeeded each other like phantoms in her mazy mind. Suddenly she is on the sea, buffeted about by the waves, and now a presage of the reality dawns upon her: the dying child—the slaughtered husband—the funeral—the past—

the present—slowly unfold before her, and therefore those quiet tears, those heavy sighs.'

'So best,' whispers Uncle Timothy. 'It is natural, and whatever is true to nature is right.'

The first words she spoke were to Jessie. They were alone for a few minutes together, and their hands tenderly clasped.

'Am I dying, Jessie?' she gasped. 'Tell me truly.'

'Thank God, dearest, you are better, but very ill,' was the reply.

'Pray for my soul,' she said, and closed her eyes.

Again, some time afterwards,—

'My child—my Anna,—where is she?'

'She is very happy, love. Be quiet, for all our sakes.'

'I know, she is in heaven. If I were with her'— The tears flowed on.

Again, at another time,—

'Where am I? Is this Plas Ayron? Am I in a dream? or what is this strange room?'

'You are among friends, dearest; do not ask more. It is essential that you should be quiet.'

Again,—

'I have been very wicked, Jessie,—wilful and vain, and altogether sinful. Will God forgive me?'

'All, for Christ's sake, dearest love. Pray through Him, and we will pray with you.'

'For Christ's sake,' she murmured, and closed her eyes.

Again,—

'Do you think my husband is in heaven? He was very good and kind, but'—

'God is merciful, Anna; let us hope. Perhaps he is not dead.'

'Ah, no! he died to punish me.'

'Hush! do not say such things. Try to be calm, and sleep, and put your trust in God.'

'For Christ's sake,' she murmured once more. And thus days wore on, with very slight and slow amendment. At the end of a week, however, she was decidedly stronger, and able to be moved in a sheet from one bed to another, whilst her bed was made. When this fatiguing operation was performed, and she was lying apparently quiet and comfortable, she addressed Pynsent, who was by her side.

'Pynsent, I have not deserved so much from you.'

'Nonsense, Anna dear; are we not brother and sister?'

'Have you forgiven me—quite—quite—what I did to Nelson?'

'Long ago; so do not let us think of it again. All was doubtless for the best.'

'And my many sins against yourself? Oh, you are so kind!'

'Anna, understand that I love you with a brother's love, and do not excite yourself by these fears.'

'Then, Pynsent, you must prove your love by going back to London. I heard Uncle Timothy urge it; I know it is right. You will lose your profession. I cannot talk. Promise me.'

Pynsent promised, and kissed his sister as he did so.

'Pynsent, God bless you! Think of me kindly. Thank you for all you did to my little Chatham long ago.'

'Now, Anna dear, you must not exert yourself; remember, I am your doctor, and you must obey.'

And for once Anna did obey her brother, and slept.

CHAPTER XLIII.

'Though the day of my destiny's over,
And the star of my fate hath declined,
Thy soft heart refused to discover
The faults which so many could find;
Though thy soul with my grief was acquainted,
It shrank not to share it with me,
And the love which my spirit hath painted
It never hath found but in *thee*.'—BYRON.

THE following day, Pynsent, at the request and by the advice of all parties, returned to London. Before he left he naturally expressed himself much obliged to Mr. Michelson for his kindness, and was glad to find him more friendly in his demeanour.

Mr. Michelson said, 'Mr. Burton, I once heard you suggest to my physician that you thought my attack paralysis. I did not know you then, but I often have wished to consult you, as I think—I fear—in short, there may be a return.'

Mr. Michelson's hand trembled. Pynsent saw the fear, and at once inquired into symptoms, and prescribed. He found the nervous system much shaken, and, although he did not say so, agreed with the patient. Country air, amusement without excitement, exercise, and certain medicines, were Pynsent's remedies, which proved different from those of the physician in town.

'You will find my uncle an able adviser if you will condescend to consult him; and anything I can do by letter I shall be most happy to do,' he said.

Pynsent had a capital horse from Mr. Michelson, and he thought he might just give himself time to take a peep at his friends before he started.

Seated in the large old-fashioned parlour, in great state, were Aunt Betsey and Mrs. Colville,—the latter reclining on a sofa with a newspaper in her hand; the former, as usual, knitting those everlasting articles for which Pynsent could never find names. Mrs. Colville was rejoiced to see her doctor, but, truth to tell, she was so much better, and had been so well treated by Uncle Timothy, that even she acknowledged herself nearly convalescent. Aunt Betsey and she suited admirably, and took to one another from the first, because each alike prided herself on her family. It was fortunate for the Burtons' reputation for antiquity, and for Pynsent's in particular, that they had an Aunt Betsey. Mrs. Colville would have looked upon them with eyes of suspicion, as nobodies, but for her. She now regarded them as people of family, and consequently equal to any one.

'Well, Pynsent,' said Aunt Betsey, 'this is a pretty concatenation of events. Only imagine my poor dear Anna's being taken to the Hall! I really would rather have followed her to her grave.'

'My dear aunt, it is a most fortunate concatenation, as it is likely to give little Chatham his rights; so pray do not trouble about that. If we can only save Anna, all will be well, I hope. But I am just come to say good-bye. Where is my uncle?'

'He has just driven Mrs. Egerton over to Fairfield. She is gone to stay a few days with Tiny, and to help to keep house. I am sure she is most kind.'

'Louisa declares that she will take care of the farm,' said Mrs. Colville. 'I hope she will not take cold. I really do not know what I should do if she were ill.'

Pynsent felt Mrs. Colville's pulse, and declared her wonderfully better; told Aunt Betsey that she looked as young as ever, and was soon on his way to Fairfield.

Here the first eager cry from all was, 'How is Anna?' even before Louisa had shaken hands with Pynsent, although she had not seen him since they parted at the Paddington station. Uncle James could not resist giving Pynsent one of his old thumps on the back, and exclaiming,—

'Do you remember the old games of chess? Miss Louisa used to puzzle you then, you rascal! I daresay she will puzzle you more now.'

'I daresay she will, uncle; all ladies are enigmas.'

'Not so much as gentlemen,' said Louisa. 'I told your uncle about the wig.'

Here Tiny came in, with something very nearly like a colour on her cheeks. She had been ordering luncheon for Pynsent.

'Tiny,' said Pynsent, 'I believe Jessie must come over here next week for a day or two; will you have any objection to take her place with Anna and Uncle Timothy during her stay? You need not be afraid of Mr. Michelson, as he is really very considerate in not interfering with Anna. It has been a strange chain of circumstances.'

'Tiny is quite brave now with strangers,' said Louisa; 'she entertained a party last week, who called to inquire for Anna.'

'Nelson expects the Indian news to-day,' said Charles; 'and we shall probably be satisfied as to the truth of the report concerning Chatham. What must be said to Anna?'

'If it is true, she had better know it at once, as she fully believes it. If untrue, joy in this case might be worse than sorrow; so it must be carefully broken to her by degrees. The excitement of hearing suddenly that he still lives might bring on a relapse. I am going to Captain Burford's, and if the mail has arrived, I will beg Nelson to ride over to the Hall and see Jessie. Anna has already been asking about it.'

Pynsent and Louisa shook hands very warmly when they parted, and, as he rode toward the town, he for awhile forgot Anna and the other family anxieties in thinking of the bright eyes of the young widow, and wondering whether his promise of remaining a bachelor for Jessie's sake was binding.

He found the Captain and Nelson in a state of great excitement, and about to start for Fairfield.

'All's right! all's well, thank God!' exclaimed the former, grasping Pynsent's hand. 'It was a false alarm; "Major Michelson slightly wounded" is the report, and his regiment not so much cut up as was originally supposed.'

'Poor Anna!' said Pynsent; 'this will be either life or death to her.'

'Life,' said the Captain, 'depend upon it. I don't believe that joy ever kills, though sorrow may. I daresay there is a letter for her in the post-office at this moment.'

They all walked to the office at once, and found, as they expected, a letter from Major Michelson to his wife, feebly directed, but still in his handwriting.

It was settled that Nelson should ride to the Hall with the news, whilst Captain Burford went to Fairfield. They saw Pynsent off, and started soon after. They had time for the following conversation first.

'I vow, Nelson, you look in better spirits than I have seen you since your return.'

'Is there not reason for it, my dear father? Major Michelson alive, and, we hope, his wife better and likely to be better,—to say nothing of good accounts from India.'

'But, Nelson,—excuse me,—but I really thought your coming home with Anna, you know, and fancying her a widow,—now, don't be angry,—but I fancied—zounds! it will out—I thought the old feelings would come back, and you would be thinking of marrying her.'

'My dear father, how little you know me! how little, indeed, most relations and friends know one another! Nothing would ever have induced me to marry her, after what I knew of her feelings and character. When my eyes were once fairly opened, there was little fear of their closing again.'

'My dear boy, it makes me young again to hear you say so. I was afraid that you had never got over that affair; I have never been comfortable about you from that hour to this.'

'Then I ought to be ashamed of myself for leaving you one moment in doubt. I find that nine or ten years make a great change in one's feelings and notions, and mine have undergone a serious one.'

'By Jove! the only change you wanted was to turn from that minx Anna to'—

'Father, you may be assured that I met Anna Michelson on the deck of the vessel as I would have met a sister, and that her sorrow at the loss of her husband caused me unmitigated pain for her, but no renewal of hope for myself. I am thankful to be able to say, that during the whole voyage I was enabled to act as a friend by her, without feeling either hope or desire of becoming anything more to her.'

'Hurrah! bravo! that's what I call a man! Now for my dear Jessie: "*revenons à nos moutons!*" By the by, Jessie is studying French and Italian diligently.'

'Again, my dear father, we must come to an understanding upon this head. You must see we can never be anything to one another but friends.'

'But what? Zounds, sir, but you must—you shall! Do you mean to say that you have found some new Anna—some fresh piece of beauty and fascination? and be hanged to them'—

'Now you must not run off in that way. I have no new piece of beauty or fascination.'

'Then who in the world, sir, do you mean to marry?'

'I do not mean to marry at all.'

'Not marry! you an old bachelor! disabled, too! Why, you want a right arm more than any man I know.'

'That is the very reason I shall never get one. I could not for one moment suppose that, maimed and middle-aged, any girl would think of me.'

'The dickens is in it if a hundred girls wouldn't think of you. But my Jessie has thought of you all her life,—little as you have deserved it,—and would, if you behaved decently, have you now, perhaps.'

'My dear father, after what passed between me and Anna, I could no more venture to ask Jessie to marry me than I could the Queen. A pretty compliment to a woman, after being jilted by her own sister! O no! I honour Jessie too highly to insult her. Gladly would I prove to her how much I honour and love her,—yes, love her,—but not by offering her a suitor rejected by her sister, and a disabled, useless soldier to boot; so do not annoy her by talking of such things.'

'Hurrah! all's right! I begin to know you, Nelson. "None but the brave deserve the fair," and you are brave and modest too, by Jove you are! There, take the letter, and ask to see Jessie. I shall have my way in my old age, after all. You must make haste, though. Be sure to marry before you are forty, because then you can both say you are thirty. I don't think Jessie looks a day more; but as for you, you look fifty at least.'

'Not very flattering to a man you wish to make agreeable to a lady of thirty. But how can I ask for Jessie?'

'With your tongue, I suppose. Isn't she the best person to give her sister's letter to? Women know more of these things than men.'

'But I must see Mr. Michelson first; remember, Chatham is his son.'

'Hang Michelson! he hasn't one grain of genuine feeling in his nature. But perhaps you are right. There's old Jess at the door. Don't start so; 'tis the mare. Now go your way, and don't ride as if you had both your arms to steer with. There, good-bye.'

Arrived at the Hall, Nelson inquired for Mr. Michelson. He was out with little Chatham. Miss Burton was naturally the next person to ask for, and in due course of time she appeared.

'I bring you good news, Jessie,' were Nelson's first words. 'I hope Anna will be well enough to bear it.'

'Thank God, then!' said Jessie, much agitated; 'Chatham is not dead.'

'Only slightly wounded. And I have a letter for Anna.'

'Oh, my dear, dear sister!' was all that Jessie could say, as she sat down, more overpowered by the sudden joy than she had been by her late sorrows. She burst into tears, and they relieved her. 'I am so thankful; I cannot help it. It is so ridiculous to cry for joy; but I am so very, very thankful.'

'We are all so thankful, Jessie. Perhaps it will save her. It will put happiness into all our hearts once more.'

Jessie suddenly looked up, and caught Nelson's eyes fixed on her with the kind, old expression, and saw, as he said, joy in his face. She, too, had been possessed with the Captain's suspicions concerning Nelson. She had tried to repress them, as very worldly and wrong; but to see Anna a widow, and Nelson her protector during a long voyage, to note his devoted attention to her, and his grief for her child, had been to recall the ancient attachment, and to make visions for the future. Now those visions were swept away, and yet Nelson looked supremely happy. There was nothing forced in his manner or expression; Jessie knew them both well, and that when he was vexed or pained, the grave, stern mouth was the index. Now he smiled as she loved to see him smile.

There was a look of surprise, or inquiry, or something peculiar, in Jessie's truthful eyes, as she glanced at Nelson, which he seemed to understand.

'*Et tu Brute?*—and you too, Jessie?' he said, as if in reply to her thought. 'You are mistaken; *that* could never have been, and neither she nor I would ever have wished it.'

Jessie blushed crimson, as if taken in a crime, and cast down her eyes. They were both silent. Jessie recovered herself, and said,—

'I must go to Anna. I am sure you will excuse me. I must consult with my uncle as to the best means of breaking this to her.'

Jessie had not been alone with Nelson for many years; he had avoided such interviews formerly; and now it was embarrassing to her. They both knew what had been originally intended, and that in young days they had themselves wished the same.

'One more word, Jessie, now I have the opportunity,' said Nelson. 'Shall you and I go back twenty years of our existence, and start from the time when I first went to India?'

Jessie could not answer, she was so taken by surprise.

'Can you look upon me as the old and early friend, who has actually returned, in mind at least, to that time, in spite of this lopped limb and these grey hairs?'

'I have never looked upon you in any other light,' said Jessie. 'I have never changed.'

The words were scarcely uttered when Jessie wished them recalled. What construction might not Nelson put upon the 'I have never changed,' so rashly expressed? If he knew how dearly she had loved him all her life, what must he think of the confession she had made? How bold and forward he must think her!

But Nelson only looked happy and grateful; he was not a vain man, and could not suppose that she had ever thought of him decidedly in any light but that of a friend.

'Then we are friends for life, Jessie; once more brother and sister, in all but blood,' said Nelson.

Again the bright tears of joy gleamed in Jessie's eyes, as she looked frankly at Nelson, and put out her hand. Nelson took it, and, as he glanced at his own left hand, said gaily,—

'It is nearest the heart, as the saying is, although it has not yet learned the friendly shake of its departed brother. God bless you, Jessie! But I am detaining you, and you must be wanted. Give my love to Anna; and if you venture to tell her, say I rejoice with all my heart.'

Jessie had not felt for many, many years the great big throb of happiness that suddenly beat in her every pulse. Chatham living, and Nelson what he used to be to her! In the excess of her joy she felt that Anna too must live to share and complete it. She did not dare to go to Anna with that face of delight and those tears. She went to her room to compose herself, and to thank God for His mercies. There she found little Chatham, searching for a book he had left there.

'What is the matter, aunty? You have been crying; but you look so gay. Ah, I know! my papa is alive! Hurrah! my papa is alive! I will go and tell grandpapa;' and without waiting for a word, the child ran off. Jessie called to him, and tried to stop him in vain, so she thought she had better follow him; but he was out of doors, and far down the drive, before she had reached the bottom of the stairs.

Jessie has truly a tell-tale face. She thinks it is calm and composed when she enters Anna's room. Uncle Timothy is quietly repeating a psalm which he knows by heart to Anna, but Anna looks up suddenly. No sooner has she seen Jessie's eyes than her own emit a wonderful light, and a flush overspreads her face.

'He is alive!' she exclaims; 'I see it;' and she suddenly rises in her bed, but falls back again from weakness. She puts her thin hand over her eyes, and all that Jessie can discover, as she leans

anxiously over her, is a nervous twitching of the mouth and trembling of the hand. Jessie prepares a composing draught, whilst Uncle Timothy watches the effect of this sudden emotion, the cause of which is unknown to him, with great anxiety. At last a low sob is heard, and tears steal through the fingers and down the cheeks. They dare not speak to her for a long time; but Jessie becomes so alarmed that she just murmurs, 'Anna, dear Anna!' as she kisses the forehead and hand of her sister.

'Yes, I can bear it; only leave me now,' murmurs Anna.

Jessie draws the curtains round the bed, and, having whispered the good news to Uncle Timothy, sits down.

It seems a long time to wait in such great uncertainty, but still the gentle sob is heard occasionally, and Jessie prays that all may be well. At last she hears a faint 'Jessie!' from the bed, and undraws the curtain. Again Anna looks at her.

'Say—say'—she exclaims.

'It is true, dearest; he lives,' says Jessie.

'I knew it—I saw it in your face. I have known the day that the letters ought to come from the first; and I have waited, and counted the days and hours, ever since we came to England. Although I believed he was dead, I have ventured to hope a little since my illness; and now there is something to live for.'

Jessie could say, 'There is always something to live for, if we strive to do our duty,' but she refrains.

'And now, kiss me, Jessie, and thank God for me. You will do it better than I, and He will hear you better; and I will learn to be grateful as I ought.' Again the quiet tears flow down Anna's pale face, as she turns away, and hides herself and her deep feelings even from her sister.

Jessie begins to think of Mr. Michelson, but finds that Uncle Timothy has already gone, she doubts not, in search of him. Uncle Timothy returns, however, and says that he has just met little Chatham, who is asking for Jessie most anxiously. Jessie goes out, and is accosted by Chatham.

'Oh, aunty, will you come to grandpapa? I am afraid I have hurt him. I did not like to tell Uncle Timothy.'

Jessie followed Chatham to the library, where she found Mr. Michelson, looking very pale, and apparently in pain. He articulated with difficulty,—

'Is—it—true? Is—my son'—

'Yes, sir, he is alive, thank God, and only slightly wounded. But you are ill?'

'Ah, yes!—my side—my head!'

Jessie rang the bell, told the man to send the housekeeper, and then went up-stairs for her uncle. She rang for a house-

maid, who had been very kind in helping to wait upon Anna, and begged her to remain with her sister, whilst she went with her uncle to Mr. Michelson.

They found him endeavouring to explain to the housekeeper that he had been a little giddy, but was better. He did not choose that any one but his medical man should suppose it possible that he—the grand and gay—could be threatened with loss of speech and motion. When Uncle Timothy appeared, he waved the housekeeper from him, who went out, followed by Jessie and little Chatham.

The clever doctor soon found what was the matter; and although he did not consider the present attack alarming, he, like Pynsent, thought it might be the precursor of paralysis. As Mr. Michelson attempted to move, there was a pain—a numbness—that kept him to his chair. He looked alarmed.

'Am I—can I be—paralyzed?' he asked, with hesitation.

'No,' said Uncle Timothy; 'but there is something very wrong in the nervous system.'

'Ah, yes! Any shock? Do not hint at paralysis—to others; —I should prefer not.'

Mr. Barnard rang the bell, and desired the servant who came to stay with his master, whilst he went to the little apothecary's shop in Anna's room to prepare some medicine. He got up-stairs with some difficulty, as he rarely went about in strange places without a guide. His sight, though better, was still imperfect.

Jessie, recollecting alone that it was a case of illness, took the medicine down-stairs. Anna appeared to be sleeping; at all events, she was composed and quiet. Mr. Michelson took the medicine with a surprised and somewhat grateful look. He made an effort at polite thanks, but Jessie said she hoped he would allow her to see to his medicines, because she was so used to it. Circumstances were taking the proud, hard heart by storm. 'Those Burtons! What was there in those Burtons? They were always brought before him without any effort either on their part or his own!' He almost thought these very words as he looked into Jessie's kind face, and took the medicine.

Mr. Michelson did not recover from this attack as speedily as from the last. He was unable to walk much, and the giddiness in his head returned at intervals. Little Chatham was invaluable, and his grandfather could scarcely allow him to be out of his sight. The truth was, he was nervous alone, and the dread of paralysis was so great that he could not bear to be without company. By degrees he managed to have Mr. Barnard a great deal with him; and as they were both men of varied information,

they got on very well together. He was astonished and amused at the simplicity of Uncle Timothy, and sometimes impressed by the deep tone of his religious opinions, which were not long at a time repressed. As to himself, although he had managed to keep up the appearance of religion, he had none at heart. He was pained when he compared his own isolation with the position of that bachelor uncle, who had, from mere generosity and goodness, drawn around him ties so strong, that nothing but death could sever them. He even dreaded the return of his only son, and scarcely knew whether to be really glad that he was alive, after all, because their meeting must be so painful and unnatural, if they met at all. Poor man! it was no easy task to nurse and wait upon him during those few weeks of querulous, impatient, and ill-supported indisposition.

CHAPTER XLIV.

'L'on revient toujours
A ses premiers amours.'

DURING those few weeks other matters began to mend. Anna was better. It was still doubtful whether she might not go into a consumption, and quite certain that if she recovered, recovery must be very slow; but she now took such pains to be better, and attended so precisely to her uncle's orders, that there was hope. By degrees all that had happened was revealed to her, and she read Chatham's letter, in which he expressed his hope that he might eat his Christmas dinner with her at Fairfield. She heard, with much trouble, and even annoyance, that she was ill at Michelson Hall; like her aunt, she could not bear to be indebted to its owner. Her constant question was, 'When shall I be able to go home?' She felt no wish to be reconciled to the man who had renounced her husband, and denounced her. She could not bear that little Chatham should be contaminated by him. She was too weak to be reasoned with, so they let her have her way, and said little of Mr. Michelson. That gentleman began to walk out, and Anna to sit up, about the same time. They were neither of them very patient convalescents, but Uncle Timothy and Jessie nursed and doctored them indefatigably, and they were both grateful,—Anna warmly and audibly so, Mr. Michelson silently and wonderingly. He could not understand the feeling that was springing up in his heart; but 'love begets love.'

Little Chatham was daily admitted to see his mamma, and daily repeated to his grandfather in the evening what he had heard in the afternoon.

'Mamma says that now she is better, she must go back to Fairfield,' he began one day.

'To Fairfield! Why cannot she stay here?'

'She said she did not like living on your bounty. I told her you loved papa and her now, but she only kissed me, and told me I knew nothing about it.'

'Go and ask your aunt if she would kindly give me five minutes' conversation.'

Chatham went.

'What am I to do?' continued Mr. Michelson in soliloquy. 'If they go away, I shall not be half attended to, and this partial reconciliation will be all over. When Chatham comes back there will be the whole thing to do again. I really like Miss Burton and Mr. Barnard, and I could not do without the little fellow now. As to Miss Annabella, I can never take to her again,—insolent, imperious young woman!—still, there may be the appearance of civility. And I must find out more concerning that wonderful Tiny. And my son! Now I know that he is alive, I dread his return. But what shall I do with myself, if I am wholly confined to my chair or bed? I must have some one to nurse me, and amongst so many soft hearts they may spare me one. I never before conceived the horrors of being alone in the world.'

Enter Jessie.

'Ah! Miss Burton. I hope you will excuse my troubling you, but my little grandson tells me that his mamma is thinking of returning to Fairfield.'

'She does not like trespassing on your kindness,' said Jessie, blushing as she remembered the real cause of her anxiety to leave the Hall.

'I think I understand her,' said Mr. Michelson grandly; 'but after what has lately happened, there must be no more of this kind of thing amongst us. I intend receiving my son here as usual, and I expect his wife'—

Here Mr. Michelson broke off abruptly, and put his hand to his head. It was remarkable that since the last attack his power of pursuing a conversation had diminished, and he seemed to lose his memory.

'I understand,' said Jessie readily. 'You are very kind, and I hope that we may be all grateful for your intentions.'

'Thank you. Where was I? Yes, that is it. Do you think your sister would see me? I am quite restored, and she is better.'

'I will ask my uncle, and if he approves, I will name the subject to Anna.'

'At once, perhaps, so that I may see her to-morrow.'

'I will mention it to my uncle at once.'

'Did you not say that you expected your sister-in-law here shortly?'

'Yes; she will come, with your permission, in my place for a day or two, as I am obliged to go home.'

'But what shall we do without you? Do you know any one at all like your sister-in-law?'

'Not at present. I used to fancy her rather like Miss Rutherford.'

'Ah! but Miss Rutherford has no relations in England. Who was your sister-in-law?'

'A ward of my uncle's.'

Jessie blushed. She always did when there was mystery.

'Did you know her relations?'

'No. I believe she is an orphan; but we seldom talk of her friends to any one.'

This was so unmistakeable that even Mr. Michelson could push it no further.

'Then you will kindly ask about your sister?' he added.

'Yes, I will go at once.'

No sooner did Jessie appear in Anna's room, than Anna exclaimed,—

'Jessie, how red you look! I am sure the great Sultan must have been complimenting you. Does he want you to marry him now? That would be a consummation!'

This was Anna's first attempt at raillery, and Jessie hailed it as a good sign.

'You would be my mother-in-law then! Uncle Timothy declares the Mogul has taken quite a fancy to you. But tell me exactly what he said. Did he tell you he meant to marry you, as he did me?'

'I fancy he feels too ill to think about marriage. Little Chatham had told him that you were talking of going to Fairfield.'

'I daresay he added –because I would not be further indebted to him. I hope he did.'

'Oh, Anna!'

'The old leaven, Jessie. I feel so much lighter and better to-day, so don't be angry. But what did he say?'

'Why, actually, that when you were sufficiently recovered, he should like to see you.'

'Me! We should fight in five minutes.'

'I do not think you would; he is so altered,—he is really grown quite pleasant.'

'Well, nothing will alter you, my best sister. You see everything *couleur de rose* still, in spite of all these years that have jaundiced my eyes. I really think I should like to see Mr. Michelson. Only he would kill me if he alluded to the past, because we should be sure to quarrel. Is he as pompous as he used to be? I remember when I thought him the very acme of perfection, and was so vain of his admiring me, that I believe, had he asked me properly, and had there been no Chatham, I should have married him.'

'If you see him, Anna, you must recollect that he is your husband's father, and an old man.'

'Do you think he looks upon himself in either of those lights? He must be greatly altered if he does.'

'He was very kind in allowing you to be brought here, when it would have been your death to have been taken home; and to have so many persons in his house, whom he disliked quite as much as we disliked him.'

'You are right, Jessie. Well, I will see him if I may; but I feel suddenly quite weak again. I wonder whether I shall live to see Chatham; and whether, if I live, I shall ever be like you. I have had lessons enough. Oh, my darling little Anna! I can never be happy again.'

Jessie was at her sister's side with jelly in a moment, and ordered perfect quiet. Anna's short-lived strength and excitement had been already too much for her, so it was evident that she could not see Mr. Michelson that day.

Uncle Timothy was of opinion that the sooner the dreaded but necessary interview was over the better, and Jessie accordingly told Mr. Michelson that if Anna was well enough, she would be glad to see him on the morrow. This determination caused more excitement to both the invalids than they chose to allow, and recalled very forcibly their last interview, when that unprecedented proposal was made, and so scornfully rejected. Each thought of this alone, and of what the other must think. The desire of pleasing, personally, is very strong in most natures, but stronger in some than others. Handsome people have it, frequently, well developed. They are admired once; they know it, and wish to be so always. If old age or sickness or sorrow bereave them of their beauty, they fancy all their power is gone, and with it the great charm of their life, since those who cared for them before will care for them no longer. They look upon themselves as faded flowers, and would fain, like them, drop out of sight. Handsome men are as vain as handsome women,—

often more so. The first crow's-foot, the first grey hair, is quite as disagreeable to the stronger as to the weaker vessel.

Thus it was with Mr. Michelson and Anna. Both had been handsome when they last met. What were they now? Could they make the same impression on each other now as then? It was curious that, in spite of all other events, that had proved and might still prove so momentous to each, this was the feeling uppermost in their minds. It might be a sudden joining of the broken link of association between them, that had been snapped when they were in the zenith of their vanity and good looks. Whatever the cause, these were the effects.

Mr. Michelson was seen before his glass, brushing and clipping hair and whiskers, arranging his attire, peering into his wrinkles, and involuntarily sighing over the changes of years. The old beau wished to be the young one, and, not being able to effect the metamorphosis, swore at his valet, and upset the *eau de millefleurs* that he was pouring on his pocket-handkerchief.

Anna, on the other hand, insisted on having the glass brought to her, for the first time since her illness. She had been contented to be dressed and undressed as Jessie willed hitherto, but now she must superintend her own toilet. Leaning back in the easy-chair, attired in a white dressing-gown, she looked at herself for the first time for many weeks.

'Oh, what a haggard, pale, miserable wretch I look!' were her first words. 'Jessie, this cannot be my own real self! It is impossible that I could see any one, looking such an object.'

'My dear Anna, let us thank God that you are better,' said Jessie, with a deep sigh.

'Yes, I do, I do!—but—what will Chatham think?' Anna burst into tears. In a few moments she laughed. 'Jessie, can you forgive such folly? Two or three months ago I cut off all my hair, because I thought I should never care for anything earthly again; and now, in spite of all my trials, I am crying because I am not as handsome as I was twenty years ago. I am sure that the Mogul will not like me for a daughter-in-law, if I have lost my good looks. I declare I am not even an interesting-looking invalid. Chatham would never bear to see me in this state.'

Even Jessie was anxious about the result of this interview, and entreated Anna to behave well, if only for the sake of her husband and child.

'I am sure it is more incumbent upon me to look well. He never, in my best days, cared for anything but my looks. Now, if the dressing-room is ready, I can be wheeled in, and the grand Sultan may attend my levee. Jessie! is it not strange that my

spirits should have returned so soon? I hate myself for them; and yet I am always thinking of those children of mine in heaven.'

'Now, dearest Anna, do be composed. Remember, all must be right against Chatham comes.'

This was the surest way of quieting her, and she allowed herself to be wheeled, in the easy-chair, into the cheerful dressing-room that had been prepared for her, without further remark. Both Uncle Timothy and Jessie remained at her request, and they awaited the august arrival with such patience as they could muster. Poor Anna had a very bright flush on her cheek when the dreaded step was heard, and would have felt more hopeful had she looked in the glass at that moment.

Mr. Michelson was duly announced by the housekeeper. The first thing Anna saw was a splendid bouquet of flowers, the very last and best that the greenhouse afforded. This little touch of gallantry, and the slight, not-to-be-overcome difficulty in walking that Anna perceived in her old admirer, quite upset her. There was first a hysterical laugh, which ended in very decided tears. Perhaps, had she tried her utmost powers of pleasing, she would not have managed so well. Mr. Michelson took her hand, laid the bouquet by her on the little table, and sat down on the chair placed for him by her side. Both were silent for a little time. Anna spoke first, and with difficulty; her voice was still low. She raised her tearful eyes to Mr. Michelson, and saw before her an old man, quite changed from the admirer of years gone by. As is usual in such cases, it was a decided commonplace that broke the spell of that awkward silence.

'What beautiful flowers! They remind me of India. How very kind of you!'

Anna took the bouquet, and played with it for a moment.

'You are better, I hope?' said Mr. Michelson, 'I came to say that you will oblige me by remaining here till—till'—he could not bring out the words, 'my son's return,' that were on his lips.

'I will do as you wish,' said Anna. 'You have been very good to me. I did not deserve it. I am very sorry'—

Mr. Michelson had never in his life expressed himself sorry for anything,—perhaps had rarely before felt sorry,—so it was not to be expected that he should begin now. Anna, on the contrary, had always been sinning, and declaring herself 'sorry' afterwards; so the effort cost her little, when once the right spring was touched.

Uncle Timothy came to the rescue.

'You must excuse me, Mr. Michelson, for saying that I am afraid my niece will not be able to converse just at present.'

Anna had suddenly turned very pale, and Mr. Michelson perceived it.

'I will come again by and by,' he said, rising. 'We must not exhaust her, I see.'

Again he took her hand, and, bending over her, left the room.

Anna began to cry very heartily, and so the awful interview ended.

It was singular that the least excitement acted as forcibly on Mr. Michelson as on Anna. No sooner did he reach the library, than he had another attack of giddiness and spasm. Mr. Barnard was called down, and was some time in restoring him. The same wandering of mind as before succeeded the attack, and he was very feeble for some hours. Mr. Barnard grew seriously alarmed about him, and wished him to send for his own physician, or to go and consult him; but Mr. Michelson was so well satisfied with Uncle Timothy that he would not consent.

The following morning Uncle James brought Tiny to replace Jessie for a few days, who found it absolutely necessary to be at Fairfield, to see after matters there. Moreover, she required rest; she was very nearly worn out with anxiety and watching.

Jessie found everything as well as could be expected at Fairfield. Louisa was awaiting her with great anxiety, and it was quite refreshing to receive the hearty kiss of affection from that joyous, hopeful friend, after the weeks of pain she had gone through. They had not met before since Jessie returned from London, and there was much to talk over. Captain Burford, Nelson, Mr. and Mrs. Barnard, and Mrs. Colville, also came to see her; and she felt almost angry with herself for being so light-hearted that first evening at home, when she had left Anna in such an uncertain state, and Mr. Michelson looking so wretched.

But how could she help being happy? When the party from the Grange had driven off, the good Captain insisted on teaching the pretty widow cribbage, for whom he declared such an affection, that he had some idea of asking her to be his partner for life. Nelson and Jessie were, by this manœuvre of the ever-watchful parent, thrown together, and they had a conversation that did both of them a great deal of good. They were surprised at the change and improvement in their respective minds. They had read and thought much during the last ten years, and they found that their course of reading and thinking had not been dissimilar. Nelson wondered where and how Jessie had gained so much general information, and how she had acquired such an insight into literature; and Jessie wondered how Nelson had found time to study, when he had been engaged in active

service. In short, the Captain was very nearly upsetting the cribbage-board once or twice, in his delight at seeing them both so happy.

'Well,' he said, 'if it were not for my bald head I should fancy myself twenty years younger! That is just how those two children used to be, when we were all happy together in "auld lang syne." I say, Jessie, sing us "Auld Lang Syne." By the way, Nelson, Jessie can accompany herself now quite well; you have no idea how accomplished she is become.'

'She will never want a trumpeter, Captain Burford, as long as you are near her,' said Louisa; 'and when you are not in the way, I will do my best to blow a loud blast in her behalf.'

'I suppose we should all do that,' said Nelson quietly.

'It is very evident my trumpeter is never likely to be out of town, if you go on at that rate,' said Jessie, blushing. 'Do you really wish "Auld Lang Syne"?'

'Do I ever ask for a song if I don't wish it, you jade?'

Jessie sang the beautiful old ballad very sweetly. Nelson drew his chair still nearer to her, and the Captain winked, very improperly, at Louisa.

Meanwhile the candle on the little cribbage-table burned out, and there was no light but the splendid blaze from the logs on the hearth.

'I tell you what it is, children,' at last burst forth the Captain, 'I can stand this no longer. "Yes" or "No" I must have. Although I am an old man, my feelings are stronger than yours at this very day.'

Here Louisa fancied that something extraordinary must be coming, and hastened out of the room.

'You needn't run away, ma'am; we are all friends here. By Jove, she is gone, and I have not a soul to back me. Not so fast, Miss Jessie, you are not going away. Now, here you are, face to face, and I'll have an answer. "For better, for worse?" or you will never come to an understanding.'

'My dear father!'

'My dear Captain Burford, pray let me go.'

'The deuce a bit!—I beg your pardon—the dickens a bit! which is best? Do you two jackanapeses mean to get married, or do you not?'

'Father, this is too bad; I must insist'—

'Captain Burford, I will not'—

'Nelson, I must insist; Jessie, I will. Now sit down, and listen to me. I know what has been in your minds all your lives, and what is there now. Jessie, tell me frankly, do you think Nelson is one bit the worse, or deserves a good wife one

bit the less, because he has lost his right arm in honourable fight?'

'Pray let me go, Captain Burford.'

'Answer me first.'

'No, certainly not.'

'Very good. Now, Nelson, do you think Jessie is unfit for the wife of a gentleman and an officer, because she was never at a finishing-school, never had language-masters, and was never considered what people call accomplished?'

'You know, sir, that my opinion of Jessie is so high, that if I expressed it before her she would think I was complimenting her.'

'Very well. You perceive, Nelson, that your objection of the "one arm" is not valid; and you perceive, Jessie, that yours of the "lack of accomplishments," etc., is not more so. Are there any others? No, God knows there are none, either in your hearts or in circumstances; and I know it, and you know it. Therefore, knowing it, let us be brave and say it; and let me have the happiness, before I die, of fulfilling my promise made at your births, and of seeing accomplished the desire of half a lifetime. Give me your hands.'

Almost unconsciously the hands were clasped.

'God bless you!—God bless you! Oh, what an old fool I am! Now I shall dance the sailor's hornpipe, to the tune of "All the same a hundred years hence." No, Jessie, you are not to leave the room; stay and settle it, and call me a meddling old matchmaking coxcomb if you will. There, give me a kiss. Shake hands, Nelson; don't abuse your father; I vow you have a scolding on your tongue!' and, half-laughing, half-crying, he went out of the room.

Nelson and Jessie were alone, and something must be said. Was there ever so awkward a predicament? Jessie actually burst out laughing; it was unromantic, but she could not help it.

'Your father is too absurd, Nelson.'

'My dear Jessie, will you say that "certainly not" again?'

'What! as regards the arm? Yes, of course I will.'

'And would you—could you—think of a poor crippled fellow like me, and make him happy for life?'

'Nelson! do you mean it?'

'Ay, well you may ask. I know I do not deserve you;—but—but—in spite of everything, I have always loved you best.'

'Me! I am old, and I have grey hairs,—and I am not good enough or clever enough for you.'

'Oh, Jessie, do not make me quite ashamed of myself. Look

at me!—war-worn, world-worn, really grey-headed, and deprived of the best half of myself—my right arm.'

'Well,' said Jessie tearfully but joyously, 'I can at least supply that right arm.'

'And you will forgive the past?—all my childish, fickle folly,—all my ingratitude,—all my want of feeling,—all—all'—

'You asked me the other day to return to the time when you first went to India; I have done so. Cannot you do the same?'

'I can—I do; but, Jessie, did you love me then?'

'Have we not always loved one another? I have never changed since we were little children.'

Ah, Nelson! what a pang those few innocent words have sent through your heart! Never changed! What years of friendship, nay, he must believe, of pure, true love, has he thrown away! How has her heart been torn and tried by him! and that heart, he knows, and has always known, is the steadiest and truest that ever beat. But now they are to return to their boyhood and girlhood, and to ignore all those middle years. She wishes it, and he will try; but he can never cease to reproach himself. It seems such a dream to Jessie, that she, whilst Nelson is thinking these thoughts, puts her hand before her eyes, and tries to make it real; with the reality, gentle tears come unbidden; and when Nelson draws away the hands, and looks into her face, the red firelight gleams into two pure, honest eyes, that are not ashamed of being all the brighter for their tears.

'Shall we go to my father, dearest Jessie?' said Nelson. 'He deserves you, if I do not; he, like you, has never changed.'

'Will you fetch him? I would rather.'

Nelson found his father discoursing with Louisa in the parlour, by a wretched low fire.

'Will you come to Jessie?'

'Is all right?'

'I hope so!'

'Then we'll "sing old rows and burn the bellows," by jingo! Come along, Mrs. Egerton; you will be glad, and so will everybody else. But you don't deserve her, sir, I shall always say that. I feel my rheumatism suddenly better, and could dance the hornpipe like a middy.'

So saying, the Captain, arm-in-arm with Louisa, flourished into the hall. He embraced Jessie, and then Louisa embraced her; and then they all four sat round the fire, and the Captain sang out lustily, 'We won't go home till morning;' and truly morning it was when they separated.

CHAPTER XLV.

'To give thee being, I lent
Out of my side to thee, nearest my heart,
Substantial life, to have thee by my side
Henceforth an individual solace dear;
Part of my soul, I seek thee, and thee claim,
My other half.'—MILTON.

PYNSENT BURTON was sitting at his solitary breakfast, with a ponderous volume on one side of him, pen, ink, and paper on the other, and tea and toast in front, when the postman's knock was heard, and amongst other letters the following was received by him:—

'MY DEAREST BROTHER,—I must begin by preparing you for a very great surprise. If I have been astonished myself, what will you be? Our good guardian and friend has at last managed to bring about what he has been so long aiming at. Nelson and your unworthy sister are actually engaged to be married, supposing always that you consent. I do not know what you will think of this, after what happened years ago; but I feel sure, strange as it seems, that Nelson is perfectly sincere in his love for me, and that I am really more to him now than Anna, or any one else. You have so long read my weak heart, that I need not tell you of my own feelings. I can only thank you for your brotherly love and protection in forbearing ever to taunt me with my weakness, and in shielding it from the gaze of others. I scarcely know how I have won, for I certainly have not deserved, the love of so many dear friends. All rejoice in my happiness, and your approval is alone wanting to make it complete. You will remember that I agreed with you—when you were so flattering as to say I should never marry—that I would be an old maid for your sake. I see the smile on your lips, as you say, "Very easy, as long as there was no temptation." I will still hold to my promise if you wish it. We were to live and die unmarried, for ourselves, Fairfield, and the younger ones. Rather than that you should live a lonely and unhappy life, I would give up Nelson, and go and be your housekeeper in Duke Street. But I have some hopes for you. As regards Fairfield, we have lived single long enough, and worked hard enough to free it from the long-standing mortgage, and it is now an improved and improving place. You must take to it as the eldest son, and then it will go on, as our poor father wished, in the

family, and under the same name. As to the younger ones, Anna is married, and likely to be happy and prosperous, if she recovers, which Uncle Timothy now believes she will. Charles and Tiny are sure to do well in their profession. I have long since renounced my prudent fears about them, and feel sure that together they could struggle through any amount of difficulty; alone, each would fall. I should be perfectly happy if I could see you so married. Talking of marriage, Louisa told me the other day that when she got to India, her parents expected her to marry. She had no desire herself to do so, but she was literally talked into it. She accordingly chose the man of highest military rank, most advanced age, gravest manners, and best reputation that proposed for her. She added gravely that she was as happy with her husband as she should have been with her father, and treated him much in the same manner. She has your wig carefully put by in a box. She has left off widows' caps, and looks as young as ever, with her nice, bright hair. But I am digressing. We have provided for Anna and Charles. Peter, I suppose, is wedded, like the Doge of Venice, to the ocean. When will he come back? Little Chatham, my last charge, will naturally live with his parents. I shall be very sorry to give him up; he is just like my own child. As to the uncles and aunt, they are very well off. Our honoured relatives at the Grange are another pattern couple; turtle-doves are nothing to them. Uncle Timothy shall always live with me; I would make that a proviso if I were going to marry an emperor. Tiny has been writing and re-writing, at his dictation, all his deep medical notes, of which he is going to make a selection for publication. It has been a great amusement to him, and her patience is untiring. If we could only find out who she is, her present would be quite unclouded.

'Thus, I think, we have gone through all the members of our family, of which you and I were left, some twenty years ago, the heads. How time flies!—yet I do not feel as old now as I did then. After this review, we ought to pause, and thank the Almighty Giver of all good things for having so mercifully led us through the temptations of the world to this present hour. We have proved that God keeps His promise of being "the Father of the fatherless." If I have said anything foolish in this letter, overlook it, for you know one is not mistress of oneself in times of great joy or excitement. I believe Nelson intends writing to you; he is so exactly the Nelson of childish days again, in his kindness, truth, and affection, that I think the past must be a dream. I must leave our dear Captain to your imagination; no one could portray all his extravagances just at present. I shall

not be quite satisfied with myself until I hear from you. I am afraid I am selfish. God bless you, my own dear brother! Love from all.—Your devoted sister,

'JESSIE BURTON.'

Pynsent put down the letter, and wiped a thick film from his eyes. 'Thank God, all is as it should be at last!' he muttered. He remained a short time in deep thought, then selected the following epistle from amongst the other unopened letters:—

'MY DEAR PYNSENT,—If you have read Jessie's letter, you know all, and that I am the most fortunate fellow in the world. It is not often that I go into ecstasies, but I am really the happiest creature breathing. There has been an unnatural weight on my mind for the last ten or twelve years that is suddenly removed, and the air seems lighter than it has been since my boyhood. You need not say, "He doesn't deserve it," for I know it well; but I suppose there is a period in every one's life when he is under a spell, and sees everything through a wrong medium. I have passed through mine, and, happily, am clearer-sighted than ever. I see in Jessie, what every one who knows her has always seen, the woman of all others in the world to make a man happy,—the purest, truest, and finest work of the Creator. I daresay I shall get into rhapsodies, but never mind. One thing I must say, that I hope you, like Jessie, will wash out of your memory all my follies; I allude to them to you for the first and last time. My love for Anna was an infatuation. I cannot now understand how a man of my grave temperament could have been absorbed by it; but we must allow that she had an irresistible fascination. In my heart of hearts Jessie's pure image lay enshrined the whole time; you may believe it or not, but so it was. I knew that I was sinning against her, against my father, and against myself, although I tried to believe that ours had been only a childish attachment. When I got back to India, and had time to reflect, I found that I had deceived myself, and every one belonging to me; but I no longer flattered myself with the hope of Jessie, so I put her, Anna, and all other ladies, out of my head, and took to my profession as a mistress. She has deprived me of my right arm, but, by dismissing me from her service, has given me a far better. You know enough of me to be assured that, whatever my indecision of character, I could not tell a lie. Believe me, then, that your sister is now all in all to me, and that I hope to prove to her my gratitude for her unselfish acceptance of a broken-down soldier, by a whole life of love and care. Will you now restore to me the

old friendship? You do not know, you cannot tell, how I have felt your estrangement. You tried not to show it, but I was well assured that you were changed, and I deserved it. Write to me soon, and say that you will sanction with one sister what I know you disapproved with another,—a marriage that your father and mine settled at our respective births. Does it not seem strange that nearly forty years have passed since that day?—more than half a life! How little they foresaw all that would happen before the event took place. My father, at seventy-five, is likely to see it consummated. I believe the germ of romance always remains in our natures, ready to sprout out whenever called forth. I am much more sentimental at this moment than I ever was, and I look into the glass, and see grey hairs in my whiskers! Jessie declares she has grey hairs, but I cannot see them. "Love is blind." I believe I have written nonsense, but this is the first really natural letter that I have addressed to you for years. My father bids me tell you that you owe him a wager; you betted with him, years ago, that neither Jessie nor you would ever marry. I advise you to lose the bet *wholly*.—Believe me, my dear Pynsent, your true old friend,

'N. BURFORD.'

Again Pynsent put down the letter, and declared that all was right. For the second time that odious page came to say that Mrs. Miller had sent again. Pynsent was obliged to go to his patients. He came back to a late dinner that he could not eat, and, having sent it away almost untasted, he sat down to his desk, and during the course of a long evening and half the night penned four letters, the contents of two of which we submit to the reader.

'MY OWN DEAR SISTER,—I must disappoint you at once. Your letter did not surprise me, as I saw how matters were, or would be, from the moment I saw you and Nelson together in London. From my heart I rejoice, because I believe you will make one another happy. But I can only give my consent on one condition, of which more hereafter. It is a great shock to my powers of discrimination and prophecy. I always said you would be an old maid, as I should be an old bachelor. I like your professing to take me into consideration, now that you have made up your mind to give me up to the mercy of any old crone of a housekeeper that may chance to get hold of me in my old age. I quite agree with you in thinking that *you*, not I, have brought the property, house, and family of Fairfield through all their difficulties, and that you now deserve to have a little peace

and rest yourself. The Almighty judges better for us than we can for ourselves. Had you married Nelson and gone to India years ago, what would have become of all the rest of us? Not that I think Nelson deserves you,—and I shall tell him so. No man ought ever to think of more than one— Excuse my breaking off in that sentence. I suddenly remembered that we were all fallible, so I must forgive Nelson, though I can never make an excuse for Anna's conduct to him. All was for the best, however; so I suppose I must forgive her too. Women are strange enigmas. There is your friend Louisa, a greater one than all, in spite of her frank manners. I cannot pretend to misunderstand your wishes in that quarter. I meant to punish you, but I shall only please you in what I am going to do. No, I am not quite sure whether I can venture to take such a leap. But you are my elder, and I am bound to follow the example of my elders and betters. In short, it is impossible for me to remain a solitary after you have so cruelly broken your word. So now for the conditions on which you have my consent to get married. You must provide a suitable housekeeper for me. I find I am getting a rich man; so I can now make the necessary proposition without being afraid of bringing the lady to starvation, or of being kept by her,—a piece of meanness that I should not like. It is useless beating about the bush,—it must come out; but you know how modest I am. In spite of my bearishness, I had always a very considerable liking for your friend Louisa. Oh, I fancy I see you at this moment! Now, don't go into fits. Nelson has heroics enough in his letter for us all. Goodness gracious! how he does lard you over! Well, I think your friend Louisa very "taking," as you say, and all that sort of thing, and I want to have your opinion as to whether she will take the wearer with the wig. Now it is out, and I have a great mind to tear up the sheet and shut it up again, for I have the greatest horror of a refusal. I have some intention of enclosing a letter to her, and one to her "honoured mother," to you, to be given at your discretion. You see I could never possibly propose face to face; I should either go into hysterics, or burst out laughing, or fairly break down in the middle. In writing, I should just be able to say, "Madam, will you have me?" and then rest on my oars till an answer came. I have not yet written those fatal words; but if you should find herewith a letter addressed to that most dangerous of all animals, "a vidder," you may take it for granted they are therein inscribed. But enough of this. If I succeed, you and I will be married on the same day, and we will pull the old house down with jollification; if I do not, why, you are bound to remain a spinster, for

my sake! What will Nelson say to this? God bless you! Love to all.—Your ever affectionate brother,

'PYNSENT.'

'MY DEAR NELSON,—I am not sure that I shall let you have Jessie. She is too good for you, or for any man but—but me, in short. I always intended to end my days at Fairfield with her, and I do not see what right you have to interfere between us. You write a great deal of humbug (excuse the term). I was never estranged from you. I always loved you; but I felt that you were not acting up to your principles, or for your happiness, and therefore I could not be quite as open with you as I wished. Now we shall be brothers again,—more really so than ever. I find there is one point on which I can pique myself,—I have never been drawn into the folly of love-rodomontade. I will keep your letter, and show it you in ten years' time. I wonder what you and Jessie will think of it then! You have a sentimental, I a matter-of-fact nature; still we were born to be a David and Jonathan. I quite believe that you never told a lie in your life; your father's son could not have told one. God bless him! he is a true man. If there were more like him, there would be less palaver and deceit in the world. A little more honest bluntness would mend mankind. We have a sprinkling of it in our family: Uncle James has it, and Jessie is as open as the day. I hope you admire Jessie's eyes; now I really do think them worth a sonnet. They always remind me of heaven, so true and clear. When *I* get soft, it is about my sister. Every blessing attend you both! all sorts of little Cupids and hearts and inexpressible valentines be around you! By the way, you always used to write the best valentines. Jessie's letter is most characteristic. For your comfort, I must assure you that she seems quite satisfied with you; but self, as usual, is secondary. She goes through her family, and, having found that most of them are provided for, thinks that she may venture to provide for herself. She has a feeling for me, however, which you (men are always selfish!) never entertained. She does not like to leave me to single blessedness; but marriage is a fearful leap!

'I am sure I have said enough about it for one letter; so, recommending you to take care of Jessie, if you do not want your head knocked off by your father, or a bullet sent through you by your affectionate brother, I am, my dear Nel, your faithful friend,

'P. BURTON.'

Having read Pynsent's letters, we may be allowed to put into

language some of the thoughts that rush through his mind as he throws himself back in his chair, and half shuts his eyes.

'*L'on revient toujours à ses premiers amours* was a sentiment I once learned. I wonder whether anybody in the world knows who his first love was? Yes, I believe Jessie does.

'I think I was in love once, when I was a boy. Then came the other two. Disgusting! But I liked Louisa the best; at all events, she is the most suited to me. But I do not think she cares a straw for me. She is always making fun of me, and cutting up all my odd, old-fashioned ways. I know that if I were quite sure of her I would propose at once. Then why not try? Had I not better wait till Anna is well? No; if I do not do it now that Jessie has set me the example, I shall never do it. Let me be honest. Am I really in love? Could I keep all those formidable promises in the marriage service? Yes. Well! nothing venture, nothing have; so here goes!'

With a desperate effort, Pynsent seated himself again at his desk. He was at least half an hour beginning, but when he did begin his pen flowed so swiftly that there seemed no end to his letter. He will not permit any one to repeat that letter; he would tear it up directly if he thought we should do so, therefore we refrain. It was signed and sealed about one o'clock in the morning. Then followed a short and concise epistle to Mrs. Colville. When this was finished, he arose, with a sigh of great relief, and walked round the room. Finally, he made a large packet of the three letters to the three ladies, and directed it to Jessie, enclosing Nelson's in an envelope by itself.

CHAPTER XLVI.

'Woman all exceeds
In ardent sanctitude and pious deeds;
And chief in woman charities prevail,
Tha soothe when sorrows or disease assail.'—BARRET.

MR. MICHELSON continued some time indisposed, and unable to pay Anna any further visits. He was obliged to keep his room for some weeks, and it was evident to his kind doctor that his health was breaking up, and that any violent shocks on his nervous system might bring on paralysis. He was very excitable and irritable, and appeared anxious for the return of his son. Mr. Barnard, as was his custom, tried to

bring religious subjects into conversation, but with no very great success. The idea of death was one that Mr. Michelson had never entertained in health, and he seemed still less to like it in sickness.

It was strange that when Tiny arrived at the Hall in place of Jessie, he ordered a certain room to be unlocked and prepared for her, that had not been used since the departure of Miss Rutherford. It is impossible to define what was in his mind, as he sat ruminating on this arrangement. He always looked upon Tiny and her picture as the counterparts of Miss Rutherford, and as such he had now a dread of seeing either, because they brought on a degree of palpitation that he could not account for; still he chose her to inhabit that apartment.

Tiny and a servant slept alternately in Anna's room, so it was not until the second night after her arrival that she took possession of this long-closed chamber. There was a comfortable fire, and everything looked as bright and cheerful as if it had been always tenanted, instead of so long unused; but it had undergone regular cleanings and airings,—only the housekeeper was ordered to keep the key. Mr. Michelson's servants had changed so often, that it was now scarcely known why that particular room was closed, and various reports of ghosts were afloat concerning it.

Tiny had put on her white dressing-gown, and let down her long hair, looking very much like Charles's Cordelia, before she thought of examining her bed-chamber. When she did look around her, she was struck with the inhabited air it had: it was as if it had suddenly lost an inmate. There were a great many books,—some on a chiffonier, some on a small bookcase. There were also various ornaments, of great beauty and taste,—chimney vases, and a selection of china and articles of *virtù* on a small table. The toilet was also covered with boxes and bottles, such as a lady of a certain standing might be supposed to require. A writing-table, with all its necessary appointments, stood in the middle of the room, and there were a variety of portraits and water-colour drawings, some in frames, and others pinned against the wall. The wardrobe and drawers were locked, and a chest of drawers seemed to have been put into the room in addition to the usual furniture, on Tiny's account. She looked at the backs of the books, and found they were chiefly foreign, and at the pictures, and saw that they were clever sketches of foreign scenery, apparently Italian. The portraits were in crayons, and all seemingly by the same hand,—sketches of dark-eyed, dark-haired, Italian-looking people.

Tiny took down one or two of the books. There was a beautiful

little edition of Dante, on the fly-leaf of which was written, 'To Sophia, from a friend;' a copy of *Il Pastor Fido*, with the words '*Alla mia figlia*' written in it. Some of the books were German, some French; some had no name written in them; others, again, were inscribed 'To Sophy,' in the same hand as the Dante. At last Tiny took down an old copy of Tasso, in which she found 'Sophia Rutherford, from her beloved mother.' Why does she so suddenly start, and then look again so intently on the writing? Because that word 'Sophia' and the general character of the writing are so remarkably like the same word and the writing in that torn scrap of paper supposed to be written by her own mother. Tiny unlocks her little dressing-case, and takes out that well-known pocket-book that she never leaves behind her, go where she will; the torn note is in it, and with trembling hand she carries it to the writing-table, and sits down in order to compare each letter, now brown with time, with those of the Tasso. Had the words 'Sophia' been written by the same hand, they could not have been more alike; in short, the whole of the broken sentences bore a remarkable resemblance to the 'from her beloved mother.' Tiny sat for hours pondering over her short life. Some twenty years ago she was born, and her mother died, leaving no clue to her relations. All the dates in these books were antecedent to that period; she was reckoned so like Miss Rutherford, that Mr. Michelson was quite affected by the likeness; the names were both 'Sophia;' Miss Rutherford had quitted the house suddenly; her room was evidently just as she had left it. It was strange!—but too horrible! Were it real, she could never again show her face in that family. She took the two rings, the wedding and the cameo, from their hiding-places in her bosom, and, looking on them, assured herself that such thoughts were too vile, and could not be. She had almost ceased to wear that cameo, because she fancied it must so remind Charles and all his kind family of the mystery that hung around her. She would wear the cameo again, and see if it attracted attention. She tried to put the thoughts that crowded on her away, but she could not, and she passed a wretched night, wondering, when awake, what and who Miss Rutherford was; and dreaming, if she slumbered a few moments, strange dreams of Mr. Michelson.

The following morning she found Anna very weak, and full of apprehensions about her recovery. 'Christmas is nearly here, and I shall not be well enough to go home,' she said. 'Tiny, I used to tease you very much; have you forgiven me?'

'My dear Anna, I have nothing but gratitude towards you all. Poor, forsaken, doomed'—

'Tiny, do not talk so, or I must send for Jessie. Pray forget that old story.'

'Anna, do you remember Miss Rutherford?'

'What an odd question!—Yes, a little.'

'What was she like?'

'I believe she was handsome.'

'Why did she leave this house?'

'Oh, I forget. I fancy Mr. Michelson sent her away. She was only a kind of housekeeper. He was very fond of her, and often talks of her.'

'How long ago was it?'

My dear child, I forget,—twenty years, I suppose; only I really cannot own to remembering twenty years.'

A servant knocked at the door.

'My master's compliments, and wishes to know how Mrs. Michelson and Mrs. Charles Burton are to-day. He is very sorry that he is not well enough to see them.'

Tiny's heart beat quickly as she answered the message. She longed to go and ask about Miss Rutherford; but for worlds she would not allow the strange suspicions that would come into her own mind to transpire.

So she kept pondering over her likeness to Miss Rutherford, and comparing those two signatures, until she half believed she was her mother, and that some strange fatality had brought her into the house where she had lived. When Charles came to take her home in the place of Jessie, he thought her looking ill, and from her manner believed that something must have distressed her. She persisted in declaring herself well, and in burying her thoughts and suspicions in her own bosom.

The meeting between Jessie and Anna was almost awkward, particularly on the part of the latter. She had been apprised of her sister's engagement with Nelson, and scarcely knew how to congratulate her, feeling that she had been the cause of their long disunion; but Jessie put her at her ease by saying at once,—

'It is all right, dearest Anna,—all as it should be. I could never have gone to India, and a long engagement would have harassed me to death.'

Then she quickly changed the conversation by informing Anna of the double wonder,—the actual proposal of their determined bachelor brother.

Anna was all curiosity and excitement, laughing and clapping her hands like a child.

'You should have seen Louisa! When I put the letter into her hands, I said, "According to your reply to this, is to be my

destiny; and I have promised to renounce Nelson if you refuse the proposal herein made." I tried to look grave, but she fancied there was some joke underneath, and began turning the letter round. "It is your brother's writing," she said, blushing very suspiciously; "he has written for his wig! Now I have it. He said he would do so, but I did not believe him. I will send it to him in a bottle of spirits of wine, as a medical curiosity." "Do," said I; "but just read the letter whilst I go up-stairs." I went, and by and by my door opened, and in came Louisa, half-laughing, half-crying, holding the letter in her hand. She shook her head at me in her arch way, and said I was very sly. Then she went to look out of the window, and I went behind her, and whispered in great affright, "Am I to give up Nelson?" She turned round and said she believed it was all a hoax. Pynsent could not care for her; he was too matter-of-fact to have written that letter. "Am I to give up Nelson?" I repeated. "Not if I can help it, certainly," she said. "But what do you mean?" I told her that I had promised Pynsent to be single as long as he was. "Anything in the world for your sake," cried Louisa. And then it came out by degrees that she had liked Pynsent better than any one else ever since her first visit to Fairfield, and that she certainly never thought that he cared for her. You know I am not an enthusiastic person; but if there is one human being more than another that I get into the clouds about, it is Pynsent, and Louisa quite satisfied me in all that she said of him. She understands and appreciates him, so I think they will be happy. I sent the note to Mrs. Colville, and a very proper letter came from her to Louisa, giving her consent; so I suppose it is all settled, except the settlements.'

'How very stupid!' was Anna's first exclamation when Jessie had concluded her history.

'That is satisfactory, at least,' said Jessie, laughing.

'Oh, I am really charmed beyond measure, my dear Jessie. I always thought Louisa was in love with Pynsent, and could have half eaten him for not proposing when she was with us first, but'—

'But, Anna, surely you appreciate Pynsent's honour!'

'Of course I do; only I like a little sentiment; and a proposal just coming in the right way, and in exactly the right place, is so stupid. Now there is some satisfaction in you and Nelson, because there is romance in the whole affair; but Pynsent is so painfully straightforward. But I must not forget the Sultan; he wishes to see you. I feel convinced he will cut out Nelson,—he is much more captivating,—and then you will prove to a demonstration the truth of our old nurse's predictions to me, "Beauty is

but skin deep, Miss Anna. You'll see, one of these days, that Miss Burton will cut out all your beauty by her goodness." A Roland for an Oliver, my own Jessie. But pray go to the Mogul. What can he have done all this time without a lady to wait on him?'

Jessie went to Mr. Michelson. She thought him looking very ill, as she entered a small sitting-room, and saw him in an easy-chair. He rose with difficulty to receive her, and spoke with a slight hesitation, but much precision.

'I am very glad to see you, Miss Burton; I have quite missed your kind attention. Your uncle has betrayed to me a family secret, and I must be allowed to congratulate you on an event that has lately occurred, which will be for your happiness.'

Jessie blushed, and thanked him.

'Colonel Burford will be a happy man; I assure you, I envy him.'

'You must not flatter me, Mr. Michelson, or I shall feel quite out of my element.'

'I would not wish to spoil you, Miss Burton, so we will think of something else. I requested the favour of this visit, to propose a plan to you that I have been maturing. I feel sure that my son will return by Christmas Day, as his regiment must have been now some time on its way home. You know that we have not been on good terms. I hate scenes, and one would be my death. I am anxious that you and all your family should eat your Christmas dinner here, and that when my son returns he should find that we are all reconciled, and thus avoid disagreeable explanations. I say this to you, because you are sensible, and will understand me; there is no one else I would speak so openly to. I hope you do not disapprove my plan?'

'Not at all,—it is very kind. But we have spent our Christmas at Fairfield from time immemorial, and I scarcely know whether all our family would consent to go elsewhere.'

'You allude to your aunt?—I have had my doubts of her. She has the pride of all the Cæsars in her nature. She was a splendid woman; I should have married her if I had not gone abroad; but that is such an old story. I will write notes to all your family, and to the Burfords, father and son, and we will have a regular reunion; I shall enjoy it. I am so *blasé* with what is called society, that I think I shall begin to settle down into a family man. I wish you were not engaged, Miss Burton.'

Jessie looked at the wreck before her with astonishment, and wondered how he could think of anything but death; but

he was dressed and got up as if he were still young and healthy.

'Shall I get you your writing materials, Mr. Michelson?' said Jessie, 'and we will do the thing at once.'

'Ah! I see you are a woman of business. You must not trouble,—allow me—let me ring.'

Jessie quietly put the portfolio and pen and ink before him. She would rather have spent Christmas Day at her dear Fairfield a hundred times over; but she saw at once that if Chatham returned, Mr. Michelson's plan would be the very best to smooth down all asperities, and to put father and son, and indeed all the family, on a comfortable footing. Mr. Michelson wrote most unexceptionable notes of invitation, and passed them over to Jessie for approval.

'Nothing could be better,' she said to each; and truly no one could manage such matters better than Mr. Michelson, when he chose to do so.

He omitted no one, wording his note to each as he conceived would be most agreeable to the receiver. Uncle James and Aunt Betsey, Pynsent, Captain Burford and Nelson, Mrs. Colville and her daughter, Charles and Tiny, and even Uncle Timothy and Anna, though they were both in the house, had each a regular invitation for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day; and Jessie almost expected one written to herself there and then.

'Does your sister ever hear from Plas Ayron now?' suddenly asked Mr. Michelson.

'O yes, frequently,' replied Jessie. 'She had a letter from Lady Georgiana the other day.'

'The Countess died some years ago, I believe?'

'O yes, soon after Major Michelson went to India.'

'And did she really give them five hundred a-year before she died?'

'Yes, she was very unworldly.'

Mr. Michelson sighed.

'I should like,'—he began, then paused. 'Does Lady Georgiana Meredith know that your sister and her child are here?'

'Yes, Anna has given her all particulars.'

'What did she say?'

'That she was very glad to have such good news, and prayed that all might end in the perfect reconciliation of yourself and son.'

'Ah! she was a good woman, I believe,—too good, in fact. Would it be possible to get her and her daughters here for Christmas?'

Jessie started with astonishment. Mr. Michelson's mind seemed wandering in his excess of hospitality.

'The season—short notice,' murmured Jessie.

'I should like to be reconciled to Lady Georgiana; I feel quite anxious. I can say this to you, because you are so good. I was not all that I might have been to her sister, Chatham's mother, who was a good wife to me. Will you ask your sister what she thinks of it? A real family party at Christmas must be a very pleasant affair; I should like it.'

Jessie went to consult with Anna.

'Charming! delightful!' were Anna's exclamations. 'Only fancy Chatham returning and finding us all assembled here, he knowing nothing about it! It is quite like a novel! I declare the Mogul is appearing in a new light. Aunt Betsey won't come, that is certain. We will write to Lady Georgiana all particulars, and if the Mogul writes a kind of penitentiary psalm, she is so good and forgiving that I should not wonder if she put it on the principle of Christian duty, and came. It would be perfect! We should have quite a dramatic entertainment; fathers and grandfathers, and uncles and great-uncles, and affianced brides and bridegrooms,—all making a regular family piece, and coming in for the last act of the drama.'

'Well, if they all take the invitation as agreeably as you do, there will be no difficulty,' said Jessie.

'After all, I may not be strong enough to enjoy the entertainment,' said Anna, with a sigh, 'and it would be nothing without the penitent black sheep. Now go and tell the great Sultan that I wholly approve, and will write myself to Lady Georgiana.'

Jessie went, meditating on the propriety of such a letter. Mr. Michelson was awaiting her impatiently, and was highly delighted to find that Anna approved his scheme. All the letters were duly despatched, some by private messengers, others by post; and Mr. Michelson seemed in better spirits than he had been for some time, and paid his daughter-in-law a visit, on the strength of them.

In the evening there arrived notes in answer to some of the invitations. As was expected, Uncle James politely declined the invitation, in a missive evidently dictated by Aunt Betsey.

'That aunt of yours is the very goddess of pride,' said Mr. Michelson. 'I should certainly have married her, but— I wonder she took your uncle after all; they were not suited.'

'She must come,' said Anna. 'I will write a pathetic note myself.'

And forthwith Anna wrote an appeal, working upon Aunt Betsey's feelings in every possible way; representing her own

uncertain health ; the troubles she had gone through ; the blessing of peace amongst relations ; the hope of the return of Chatham ; the failing condition of Mr. Michelson ; and, above all, his continued admiration of Aunt Betsey,—until nothing short of a heart of stone could resist. With a certain degree of childish imbecility, Mr. Michelson set his heart on her coming, and wrote another note, offering to send his carriage for her and Mrs. Colville. Jessie could not but perceive what her uncle feared and foretold, that the great man of taste and learning was gradually sinking into a state of imbecility, and that a few more attacks of his enemy would complete his prostration of intellect.

If we follow the messenger to the Grange, we shall witness a characteristic scene there, on the arrival of the second note :— Aunt Betsey by the fire, with Uncle James at her side, and Mrs. Colville on the sofa. Aunt Betsey takes her eyeglass (nothing can induce her to wear spectacles), and begins Anna's appeal. She reads with difficulty, for the writing is feeble. There is no visible emotion for some time. At last the mouth evinces sundry twitchings, and a little nervous cough succeeds. By and by the handkerchief is applied to the nose, and finally drawn across the eyes, and something like a little sob is heard.

'Bless my stars ! what is the matter, my dear?' says Uncle James.

'Nothing. Pray be calm. Anna is so absurd ! she will have us at the Hall for Christmas Day.'

'Poor Anna ! poor child ! And here's another note from the Squire. I little thought the time would come that should bring Farmer Barnard '—

'My dear Mr. Barnard, how you talk ! We are quite as good '—

'The Burtons, my dear, but not the Barnards. Well, what do you say now, my dear? My stars and garters ! I don't see how we can refuse again.'

'What do you say, Mrs. Colville? I have communicated to you all the circumstances,' said Aunt Betsey, passing the notes. 'My soul revolts against partaking of that man's hospitality.'

Mrs. Colville read, and expressed her opinion that she scarcely saw how two such invitations could be refused.

'Then I suppose I must stoop for once,—for Anna's sake,' said Aunt Betsey, sweeping across the room in anything but a stooping attitude.

Uncle James rubbed his hands, exclaiming, 'Right, my dear, always right !' and got the writing materials.

'"Mr. and Mrs. Barnard will do themselves the honour" '—

'"Pleasure" is quite strong enough, Mr. Barnard.'

'"The pleasure of accepting Mr. Michelson's polite"'—

'You need not insert "polite;" "invitation" is quite sufficient. And you can add, "but will on no account give him the trouble of sending his carriage, though obliged by the intention."'

'Short and sweet, my dear.'

'Quite enough. Pray, Mr. Barnard, take the crest; do not seal it with those vulgar initials.'

'J. B., James Barnard; nothing vulgar in that, my dear. However, I am your servant, so give me the unicorn.'

This note caused such ridiculous joy at the Hall, that assuredly Aunt Betsey would have been flattered had she seen it. Little Chatham caught the excitement, and went about the house singing 'Uncle James and Aunt Betsey are coming Christmas Day' to an original air, that was more expressive than musical, though the boy had a fine voice.

The crowning glory of the whole affair arrived, in a letter of actual acceptance from the Lady Georgiana Meredith, who consented to come with her two daughters to the Hall, on Christmas Eve, and to remain some days. She said it was a long journey to make at such a time of the year, but that, next to her own children, she loved Chatham and Anna, and rejoiced in their reconciliation with their father. She knew that, were her sister living, she would wish her to be also on terms with her husband, who had made such an advance as no Christian woman could fail to meet half-way; and so she would come, God willing, and join the Christmas gathering at Michelson Hall. Her daughters were delighted at the prospect of seeing their cousins, and so many new friends, and were all excitement and preparation.

But what were their excitement and preparation to what were going on at Michelson Hall! Mr. Michelson was resolved to have everything grand for the occasion, and neither expense nor trouble was spared to make the anticipated reunion a cheerful one. Jessie was at the head of every department, from the floral and vernal decorations of the house, to the consultations with the housekeeper upon the accommodation of the guests. Since the election ball, so many years ago, no such preparations had been made; and Mr. Michelson's anxiety to do the thing handsomely was so great, that he sent to London for a first-rate cook, as well as for all the accessaries of the gastronomic art. He insisted upon all the members of the Burton family taking up their abode at his house during the visit of Lady Georgiana and her daughters; and poor old Fairfield was to be left empty, to Dinah and Will's great disgust, for the first Christmas in the

memory of man. Jessie did not, however, forget her humble friends. She ordered plenty of roast-beef and plum-pudding for the work-people and their families, and gave Dinah full permission to make merry on Christmas Eve as well; still that faithful servant, though solaced, was not pleased.

CHAPTER XLVII.

'And such is human life; so gliding on,
It glimmers like a meteor, and is gone!
Yet is the tale, brief though it be, and strange,
As full, methinks, of wild and wondrous change
As any that the wandering tribes require,
Stretch'd in the desert round their evening fire;
As any, sung of old, in hall or bower,
To minstrel harps at midnight's witching hour!'

ROGERS.

THE important Christmas Eve dawned upon Michelson Hall. The whole household was in a state of bustle and excitement. Fires blazed in every room, below stairs and above. The hall and dining-room were ornamented with wreaths of holly and ivy, and the drawing-room and library with every rare greenhouse plant that could be procured. Mr. Michelson stalked majestically through every apartment, followed by little Chatham, singing and dancing with delight. He rubbed his hands with evident satisfaction, and seemed in excellent spirits and improved health. Jessie was here, there, and everywhere,—surprised at herself for having gone through so much in a strange house, and heartily wishing all was over. Anna had been brought down-stairs, and was ensconced in that identical little inner room between the drawing-room and conservatory, in which Mr. Michelson had made his proposal years ago. This little room was filled with the very choicest works of art and *virtù*, and the rarest furniture that the world could afford. Uncle Timothy was also here. The whole of that day, poor Anna's heart beat so quickly that she knew not how she bore up, hour after hour. She kept herself forcibly still, and seemed outwardly composed; but Jessie saw the restless eye, changing colour, and excited air, and dreaded the result. By and by Mr. Michelson joined her, and little Chatham sat at her feet, and tried to read aloud to her; but every breath of air seemed to each the rattle of a carriage wheel, and kept up a state of feverish excitement amongst them. Anna reclined, amid rose-coloured cushions, in a carved chair of ebony, and was in herself a picture, with her

beautiful child at her feet. Dressed in deep mourning, you saw that some heavy grief and sickness had passed over, without destroying her great loveliness. The dark hair, that she had so rashly cut off when she had heard of her husband's death, was beginning to grow again, and stole out from beneath the simple invalid's cap in short wavy curls. We need scarcely describe the fitful animation of the dark eyes, or the hectic flush of the pale thin cheek. They still made the good uncle fear consumption, and convinced him that she would be always, more or less, an invalid.

On the opposite side of the fire, with a book in his hand, professing to read, but not reading, sat Mr. Michelson, gazing at Anna and her boy, and thinking, perhaps, as so many do when too late, of happiness thrown away. He was dressed in the extreme of propriety, and, like his daughter-in-law, was trying to be outwardly calm, whilst his heart was throbbing almost audibly.

Uncle Timothy, with a face as serene as his pure unruffled mind, sat with his hand over his eyes, and silently prayed for all.

It was four o'clock, and the last rays of the winter sun were looking enviously through the window upon the huge fire that blazed within, and threw a red glare on the anxious faces, reflected on all sides by the cheerful rose-coloured hangings and gorgeous ornaments. At last there was a sharp, loud ring at the bell, that, echoing through every part of the large house, struck into every heart.

'It is Lady Georgiana,' said Mr. Michelson, rising suddenly, then sitting down again, with a strong effort to be calm.

There was a great rushing of feet in the hall, and an evident commotion. A servant put his head into the room, said 'Miss Burton,' and as suddenly disappeared; soon after, Jessie came in, looking greatly agitated.

'Mr. Michelson—Anna,—he is—he is'—

Poor Jessie was a bad dissembler.

'Chatham!' exclaimed Anna, rising and attempting to pass Jessie, but staggering as she did so.

She would have fallen, but two beloved and protecting arms supported her. It was her husband. She did not faint in that long, fond embrace, but a flood of tears relieved her.

Meanwhile Mr. Michelson sat immoveable. Pride was struggling with feeling. His son must come to him first.

Anna freed herself at last from her husband's arms, and pointed to his father, behind whose chair they stood. Chatham went to him.

'Father!' was all he could say, whilst tears rolled down his cheeks.

The father arose, and, for the first time in their lives, he and his son folded the arms of love and peace around each other. It was an affecting sight. Anna buried her head in her cushions, and sobbed aloud. Her uncle wept over her. Little Chatham, awed and silent, crept up to his grandfather's side, and seemed to wait until his turn should come.

'You have forgiven me, my father?' at last murmured Chatham; but the old man could not answer. This was one of the few times in his life that he had really felt, and words would not come.

'Grandpapa!' whispered little Chatham.

'My boy! my only one!' cried the father, sitting down by his wife, and bursting into an agony of tears.

Even in such a reunion there was cloud amid the sunshine.

Jessie had written a letter to him, to meet him at the inn telling him to come straight to his father's, and at the same time informing him of the death of his child. He had had no news from home since that event.

Oh! he had so loved that little Anna, now gone from him for ever!

But he felt obliged to rouse himself, for the sake of his wife and father. And when they all became more composed, there was fresh grief for him in the midst of his joy,—his wife the shadow of what he had last seen her, his father a very wreck. Alas! the gay, light-hearted, thoughtless Chatham is sobered for ever now. He sees and feels, as he has never seen and felt before, the instability of all earthly things; and as he again takes his wife to his heart, for the first time in his paternal home, he knows that their happiness has been overshadowed, and that death and suffering have been at work between them.

Thus it is ever, as life flows on. Our most joyous meetings are saddened by the visions of partings that have been; our most mirthful hours are darkened by the remembrance of others, as mirthful, passed with those who are dead or far away; and our purest happiness overshadowed by recollections of trials past, and anticipations of certain future sorrows, that remind us of the brief tenure of all earthly things, and the certainty that this world is not our home.

And where is Jessie during this affecting scene?—she who is always first to assist and comfort in all hours of joy and sorrow. She is actually, in her turn, hanging on the neck and pressed in the arms of some unknown gentleman, in Mr. Michelson's library. Highly improper, Mistress Jessie! You, engaged to a

grave colonel, of becoming years, to be laughing and crying, kissing and embracing a handsome young man that your friends would not know! And such a handsome young man! We have had our good-looking man in this history. Chatham has been our hero for good looks, undoubtedly. But he cannot compare with this black-eyed, black-haired, very brown-faced, laughing, tall, somewhat carelessly-attired hero. Oh, Jessie! Jessie! And you let him kiss you again and again!

'I declare I should have known you, Jessie! I suppose you are older? Yes, you really are twenty years older! I ought to be ashamed of having been so long away. Nobody will know me. What sport! Don't tell them who I am, but make a kind of introduction. Major Michelson would have me come with him. I got leave directly, and here I am.'

'And you never wrote, and never came home all these years! You cannot have cared for us.' Jessie's eyes filled with tears as she said this.

'Not cared for you! I should have written, and come home too, fifty times, only just as I was on the eve of doing it, something prevented me.'

Of course we all know it is Peter, so there needs no explanation.

'But I tell you what, Jessie, I don't like coming first to this grand place. Fairfield for me! I hate old Michelson,—I always did; and here we are, fraternizing and bamboozling, as if we were kith and kin.'

'So we are. For Chatham and Anna's sake, we must smooth everything.'

'I don't mean to stay here. I am under no obligation, and I would not stoop to the Queen. I shall go to Fairfield.'

'With Dinah?'

'Yes, it would be great fun. I mean to give all the people a feast in honour of my return.'

'Not to-morrow; they have their dinner to-morrow.'

'I wish I had mine now; I am as hungry as a cabin-boy. Cannot I see Anna?'

'We must wait till the first excitement is over.'

'If I could make up my mind to stay, Chatham and I had a plan. He was to introduce me at Fairfield as his intimate friend, and see who would find me out.'

Here the door opened, and Mr. Michelson and Chatham appeared.

'This is my friend Mr. Buxton, father,' said Chatham.

'I am glad to see you; any friend of my son's is welcome here. Miss Burton, I am much obliged to you for entertaining

this gentleman. You are always considerate. You will not object to a small bachelor's room, I hope, Mr. Buxton?'

'Sir, you are very good,—I—I'—stammered Peter.

'Come with me!' said Chatham, taking him by the button-hole. 'You must make yourself presentable, and then we will have some dinner.'

Jessie ran up-stairs, and indicated a room prepared for Pynsent, whither Chatham took Peter.

'A handsome young man, but with awkward manners,' said Mr. Michelson, as he returned to the inner room.

Another ring at the bell, and soon after Lady Georgiana and her daughters were in the hall. Chatham rushed down to welcome them first, and to take off the awkwardness of the meeting with his father.

'My dear aunt! this is good! this is like you, and only you. Father, here are my aunt and cousins.'

Mr. Michelson came into the hall to receive them, and they all shook hands. He looked pale, and Lady Georgiana agitated, but the meeting with Anna and little Chatham soon restored equanimity.

'It is impossible that you can be my cousins, Rose and Violet!' said Chatham, walking gravely round the two graceful girls, that were children at his wedding. 'Anna, we are getting old, or else these are not our cousins, and this is not our child.'

'Indeed I am, papa; and I shall be a man soon, Dinah says so.'

Jessie came to greet and be greeted, and finally to take the travellers to their rooms. Uncle Timothy had made his escape into the drawing-room.

Fresh arrivals! Charles and Tiny, Pynsent and Louisa. Strange to say, Pynsent had arranged to travel all night, and to spend that day at Fairfield. The ladies went at once up-stairs.

They all managed to assemble in the large drawing-room by seven o'clock, with the exception of Anna, who was to remain quiet until the evening. Tiny came in under Jessie's wing, looking whiter than the simple white dress she wore. Mr. Michelson scarcely dared to look at her, she affected him so strangely; and she was nervously pressing that ancient cameo beneath her glove, and wondering what right she had in that family party of good and well-known parentage. She was introduced to the strangers, who had previously been looking at her portrait in Cordelia.

Captain Burford and Nelson were announced; shortly after, Mr. and Mrs. Barnard and Mrs. Colville.

All the previous arrivals were really as nothing compared to

Aunt Betsey's. She swept into the room in her black velvet dress, like a princess. Mr. Michelson's bow and her curtsey were worth seeing. The simple Lady Georgiana and her modest daughters quite shrank beneath the overpowering magnificence of the introduction. Hers was the old school, but it was unquestionably the grand one. She sailed into a chair, and glanced around her haughtily; but when she saw how altered Mr. Michelson was, her eyes rested with real complacence upon her handsome, portly husband: she never admired him so much before.

Dinner was announced. Mr. Michelson knew how to manage such things, and every one was paired to perfection. The *fiancés* fell together quite naturally; and, considering the awkwardness of the meeting of so many estranged people, the dinner went off capitally. It was first-rate, and Mr. Michelson played the host well, aided by Chatham, when memory, as it sometimes would, failed him.

Tiny and Peter were the only uncomfortable guests. The former thought of nothing but her ring, and was at last made so wretched by fancying that Mr. Michelson might recognise it before all that company, that her courage failed her, and she drew it off, and hid it in her glove. She looked so ill and nervous, that every one pitied her, and Charles felt quite unhappy. As to Peter, he would have got on famously with Rose and Violet, one on each side of him, but he chanced to have Pynsent opposite, who did nothing but look at him. Louisa declared that Pynsent had not a word to say to her, and threatened to complain to Jessie.

'I beg your pardon, but I cannot help looking at that gentleman opposite,' said Pynsent; 'I am sure I have seen him before, but cannot remember where. His laugh reminds me of some one also.'

'He is very like Anna,' said Louisa.

Peter said something about the sea to his pretty neighbour, which caught Captain Burford's ear, on the other side.

'You are a sailor, like myself, I fancy?' said the Captain.

'Yes, I am one of the jolly tars of Old England,' was the reply.

'I must shake hands with you after dinner,' said the Captain heartily.

'As he spoke loud, all eyes were drawn upon Peter; and Uncle James indulged in such a stare, that Aunt Betsey was obliged to address him, to distract his attention.

'Did you ever chance to fall in with a nevy of mine,—Lieutenant Burton, of the *Bonne Espérance?*' asked Uncle James across the table.

'Yes—no—not exactly,' said Peter.

The ladies were just leaving the dinner-table.

'I daresay you never did!' roared Uncle James, rising abruptly, and almost pulling the dessert off the table. He did upset two glasses of wine, and overturned a pyramid of oranges. 'I daresay you never did; and you are not that very identical nevy, I suppose, that used to be the torment of my life?'

Here Uncle James reached Peter, and, as was his wont, greeted him with a heavy slap upon the back, and then shook hands with him till he nearly wrung the hand off. 'You young rascal! you didn't deceive me long. I knew the wicked eyes, and the father's voice!'

There was a great confusion. All the friends crowded round Peter, shaking hands by turns, asking questions, and making the dining-room resound with laughter and delight.

We have forgotten to say that Jessie waylaid Nelson and Louisa, and let them into the secret, so they greeted Peter as Mr. Buxton, an Indian acquaintance.

Even Aunt Betsey forgot her dignity, and actually embraced her favourite nephew before all the company.

'This is a new sister,' said Pynsent, leading the shrinking Tiny up to Peter.

'I suppose I must not kiss her in public?' whispered Peter, taking her hand; 'but it is only a pleasure in reserve. I want to know, Charles, what right you had to marry before me. I am the only genuine bachelor in the family. Uncle James, who would have supposed that you could have deserted the brotherhood?'

'Haw! haw! haw!—too proud, nevy, too proud.'

'My dear Mr. Barnard!' from Aunt Betsey. 'Mr. Michelson, we must really apologize for this scene,' she added, grandly approaching her former admirer.

'Mr. Michelson,' broke in Peter, 'it was not my fault. I beg your pardon for causing such an uproar, but Chatham would have it so. Where is he? That is too bad; he has left me to bear all the odium of getting up a scene by myself.'

'Allow me to shake hands with you,' said Mr. Michelson, 'and welcome you home. I remember you would not come near me when I saw you last.'

'I was always a rebellious fellow,' said Peter, blushing at the remembrance of his pride.

Jessie was crying, and Lady Georgiana felt her eyes sympathetically moist, as she and Nelson stood on each side of her. The young ladies were looking with pleased countenances from one to the other of the happy family.

'Where are my children?' said Mr. Michelson.

Tiny involuntarily pressed the ring, and turned paler than before. Alas! poor Tiny!—the only anxious heart in all that joyous party.

'Here we are, grandpapa!' cried little Chatham, throwing open the door to admit his father, who was wheeling Anna into the room in her chair of state, accompanied by Uncle Timothy, who had declined dining with the party upon plea of his imperfect sight. Tiny was at Uncle Timothy's side in a moment, to lead him if necessary, and to find certain refuge in his fatherly love.

'This excitement will kill Anna,' whispered Pynsent to Louisa, as the brother and sister met, and Peter hung over her chair and kissed her.

'And you are my uncle, and I stayed up to see you! papa said so,' broke in little Chatham.

'I thank God for being allowed to see this day,' said Uncle Timothy emphatically, pressing Peter's hand. 'All is unity and peace, and not one of you is lost.'

Tiny clung to Uncle Timothy's arm. It was strange that she felt at home with no one else that day, not even with her husband; she could look no one else in the face, she had such an awful secret on her heart.

'Now I must propose that the ladies all sit down again, and that we return to the ancient custom of drinking healths, even in their presence,' said Mr. Michelson; 'Lady Georgiana, Mrs. Barnard, will you consent?'

Both ladies smiled approval in their different ways, and Mr. Michelson proposed the healths of the Indian wanderers by sea and land, Lieutenant Burton and his own son; adding, in a trembling voice, 'a hearty welcome home.' In spite of Mrs. Barnard's look of severe reproof, Uncle James began a regular 'Hip, hip, hip, hurrah!' which Captain Burford took up, and the rest echoed right merrily. It was so infectious, that the servants rushed out of their own provinces into the hall, and gave a cheer for Major Michelson, their future lord and master. Could such a thing be in that refined mansion? Truly yes, and healths continued to be drunk, and speeches made, until every one present had been well toasted, and roasted too.

Chatham made a very touching little speech, in which he alluded to the mingled cup of extreme happiness and sorrow that he had tasted that day; the joy of meeting all he loved best in the world, under his father's roof; and the hope that he should be a wiser and a better man for the future.

There were not many dry eyes in the room whilst he spoke,

and Peter's mirthful voice and joyous manner were very necessary to restore anything like gaiety. He declared that he had suddenly stumbled upon a party of relations so considerable, that he scarcely knew where the relationship began or ended, the more especially as those who were not now actually his connections were about to admit him to that honour; therefore he proposed the healths of all affianced lovers, whether in Somersetshire or Timbuctoo.

Jessie and Louisa blushed very much. Captain Burford looked at Nelson, Uncle James looked at Pynsent, but neither seemed much inclined to return thanks.

'May I be permitted to couple "The Army" with the toast?' said Captain Burford; 'love and glory always go together.'

Nelson was no longer backward in returning thanks: he managed to get through the united toast with honour, winding up with a compliment to the ladies, and touching on the happiness of the man who was in the condition mentioned by the lieutenant. He proposed the health of their host; after which they had 'The Navy,' for Captain Burford, 'The Faculty,' for Pynsent, and 'Success to the Arts,' for Charles. And so the dinner ended merrily, and the ladies at last found themselves in the drawing-room, whither the gentlemen were not long in following them.

'I had no idea of the pleasures of a family gathering,' said Mr. Michelson to Jessie; 'I shall hope to have them frequently henceforth.'

Poor man! just as he was on the brink of the other life, he began to feel what was the purest happiness in this.

This day of excitement came to an end, like other days. Mr. and Mrs. Barnard and Mrs. Colville, and Captain Burford and his son, left early, with a promise of returning to a six o'clock dinner on the morrow. The rest of the company retired for the night, with varied, and many with agitated, feelings.

Jessie had much difficulty in keeping Anna from a fit of hysterics, when they had retired to their room; but she succeeded in getting her to bed, and resolutely refused admittance to all but Pynsent, who, with a grave countenance, recommended perfect quiet. As to Chatham, the outburst of his feelings, when he was, for the first time, alone, was dreadful; he had kept them down with desperate force during the evening, in the fear of annoying his father, and disturbing the harmony of the wonderful party he had met, but when alone they fairly gave way. He had returned to find his beloved child in her grave, and his wife apparently recovering from the very jaws of death,—if, indeed, she were recovering. The reconciliation with his father had

been so unexpected, that the surprise had been almost more than he could bear; and the shock of seeing that father so changed, was very great. He walked his room in agony, until at last a violent burst of tears relieved him. He had scarcely time to think of Nelson. A meeting with him, that at any other period would have seemed the most painful thing in the world, had been secondary,—a mere matter of course. In the confusion, Nelson had held out his hand, and he had grasped it, literally forgetful of the past. His feelings at last became too overpowering for endurance. Pynsent slept in the next room, and he resolved to go to him, and hear the real history of the past three or four months. He went and aroused Pynsent, who was alarmed by his agitation, and very long in quieting it. He told him everything,—of Anna's voyage home, and Nelson's kindness; of his child's death, and his wife's rupturing a blood-vessel, and being brought to his father's house; of the reconciliation through these singular coincidences; of Nelson's engagement with Jessie; and of his hopes that, with care, Anna would recover. He succeeded in checking Chatham's extreme emotion by degrees, but did not succeed in preventing his self-reproaches.

'Pynsent, I have been useless and selfish all my life! I have been of no good to any one. I have not deserved to find my father restored to me, and my friends true, or to be spared for this day. I have been careless of others, and I deserve punishment. Oh! I have had it! That child was the apple of my eye. Oh, Pynsent! help me, teach me to be a better man.'

'My dear Chatham, God has dealt mercifully with us all; we shall all be happy.'

'You will, for you deserve it. How different was your conduct to mine! You might have married as I did; you might have squandered as I did. But you are happy in a good conscience; I have never known real happiness.'

'You will learn to seek it by and by where alone it can be found,—you and Anna together. You have years before you, and much to do in them. And now, my good fellow, compose yourself, and go to bed; remember we cannot have more invalids. I vow I will not come Christmasing to be made a doctor of; I have enough of that in town.'

'But one thing more: I must not be wholly taken up with my own griefs. What do you all mean to do?—where to live?—when to be married?'

'How can you ask such questions of a modest man? I am to live in London, of course, and to modernize the house in Duke Street, and to make my fortune,—and to be very miserable, as

most married men are, according to what I remark. Between ourselves, I am not quite sure that a bachelor life is not the best; but then I was compelled to marry, on Jessie's account.——Ah! well done! I am so glad to see the old smile! As to Nelson and Jessie, they are old-fashioned enough to wish to play at Darby and Joan for life at Fairfield. Jessie cannot leave Fairfield, so they are to build, and improve, and make quite a grand place of it. Uncle Timothy is to live with them; and Mrs. Colville, thank my lucky stars! is so delighted with Aunt Betsey, and Aunt Betsey with Mrs. Colville, that she is to board and lodge at the Grange. Poor Uncle James! But there never was a more willing victim,—he is the happiest of the whole family. He says I am to have the Grange; so in the course of years we shall be a colony,—you at the Hall, Jessie at Fairfield, and your humble servant at the Grange. Doubtless Charles and Tiny will find a painting-room somewhere near, and Peter a cabin.

'But when are you going to be married?'

'Oh, some time in the spring, when the cowslips and violets and all that sort of thing grow in the fields and hedges between Fairfield and the church, making a natural carpet, and so saving expense; and when you and Anna are well, and able to get through two weddings in one day; in short, as soon as possible, my good brother. Now, I insist on your going to bed. You have no pity on a poor wretch that you awoke from a dream of—of—"O no, we never mention her"—into this frosty air. See how I am shivering. Will you promise to go to bed?'

'Yes, I promise. God bless you! You have done me a world of good,—you always do. You really believe Anna will recover?'

'Yes, with God's blessing. Good-night.'

CHAPTER XLVIII.

'Come away: no more of mirth
Is here, or merry-making sound;
The house was builded of the earth,
And shall fall again to ground.'—TENNYSON.

THE following morning many and joyous were the Christmas greetings. 'A happy Christmas!' resounded through the house, and there seemed every prospect, outwardly at least, of the wish being fulfilled. Mr. Michelson was in wonderful spirits, and appeared to have regained health in the excitement and importance of his new position of head of the family.

Chatham was calm, and even cheerful, and devoted himself to his father in a way that astonished the old man and charmed every one else. Anna was fatigued with the excitement of the previous day, and did not, of course, appear at breakfast; but happiness had its usually beneficial effect upon her, and she declared herself much better.

Tiny was the one great sufferer, who bore about with her an anguish that was too much for her strength.

'I am sure you are ill, my dearest Tiny,' said Charles; 'something troubles you. I thought we were to have no secrets from each other,—but one heart and one mind; and yet you will not tell me what is the matter with you. Shall we go home to Fairfield, and avoid this grandeur and gaiety?'

'O no! O no! I like being here; I must be here. But I feel—oh! quite well, dear Charles, quite well. I am ungrateful not to be more cheerful, but I cannot help it.'

Charles knew that Tiny always felt the uncertainty of her parentage more amongst strangers than at home, and fancied this might distress her now, so said no more, fearing to increase the pain.

Tiny was dressing for church when this conversation took place, and shortly after the bells were heard. Jessie remained at home with Anna, but all the rest of the party went to church. Mr. Michelson leant upon his son's arm, and Tiny led her dear Uncle Timothy.

When the service was over, poor Chatham lingered a few moments by his child's grave.

'Had she not been buried there, we should not be side by side now,' said Mr. Michelson, with more of natural feeling than he had ever shown before. If he was getting childish, his second childhood was better than his manhood had been.

There was service again in the afternoon. Mr. Michelson was evidently anxious to set a good example, and wished to go, so Jessie and Lady Georgiana volunteered to accompany him, as did some of the others. Chatham remained at home with Anna, who was again established in her favourite room; and Uncle Timothy not feeling very well, Tiny begged to be allowed to stay and read to him.

'Tiny, my dear child, we will go and read in the library,' said Uncle Timothy, 'and leave Chatham and Anna to talk of much that they might not like to mention even before us.'

They went accordingly.

'And now, Tiny,' said good Uncle Timothy, 'I have something to say to you. I have remarked lately that you have seemed unhappy; your husband, Pynsent, and Jessie have also

remarked it. Surely, if you have anything on your mind, you could not conceal it from your relations and friends.'

Tiny began to cry. She had never deceived Uncle Timothy; she could not now utter even a word that was not true, to him.

'Come here, my child; sit by my side, and tell me what afflicts you. I have a right to know it, and must know it.'

'I cannot!—oh, I cannot!'

'Tiny, I stand in the place of your earthly parent, and as such I command you to be open with me. Has any one injured or offended you? The impression we all have is, that some one has inadvertently done something to distress you.'

'No, no. I have nothing but kindness and affection from all. I am ungrateful to be so unhappy. My more than father, I will tell you all. But will you promise not to reveal what I tell, to any one, not even to Charles?'

'There should be no secrets between husband and wife. I do not like this; I can scarcely promise.'

'I cannot tell you my wretched secret without the promise: it would bring disgrace on the whole family.'

'Tiny, you frighten me. Do not sob so, child. Well, I promise: tell me all.'

Tiny sank down on the hearthrug at the good man's feet, hid her face from him, and began her story. She unfolded all her suspicions; told him how she had gathered, from one and another, the date of Miss Rutherford's departure from the Hall; how that the writing in the books corresponded exactly with that on the torn note; how that she had found the donor of one or two of the books to have been Mr. Michelson, by comparing the writing with some that she had seen of his; and, finally, how that Mr. Michelson was always troubled in her presence, and could never look her in the face, though very kind to her. Then she said that every one who had known Miss Rutherford remarked her extraordinary likeness to her, and that Mr. Michelson had evidently, according to Pynsent's account, been so overcome by the 'Cordelia,' that he had been taken ill at sight of the picture. She said the curious and rare cameo ring was just such a one as Mr. Michelson would have purchased, and she had been vainly trying to place it in his sight, to see whether it would attract his attention, and what effect it might have on him. She wound up with a violent burst of grief, entreating her kind protector not to name what she had said, or to bring disgrace upon his family.

Uncle Timothy put his hand upon the head of the prostrate girl, but did not speak for a long time. His countenance wore an expression of great pain and doubt, and it was long before it

cleared. Tiny's low sobs alone broke the silence. At last he said,—

'All these circumstances may be only curious coincidences, and they may be links in the great chain of providence: we must not put them aside without examining them. What we do, we must do openly. If Mr. Michelson has sinned, his sin will find him out, but we will be as gentle as we can to him; if we sin in suspecting him, on our heads be the crime of injustice. At all events, certainty is better than uncertainty, and we have perhaps the means of discovering the truth. I will show Mr. Michelson the ring, and you can watch his countenance, and see what effect it has upon him. If this fail, I will question him more particularly of Miss Rutherford, and, if necessary, mention your history. It will be strange if we do not elicit the truth, if truth is to be elicited. We must seize the very first opportunity we have when alone with Mr. Michelson. Perhaps he may come here after church,—he generally rests in this room. But we must be very gentle, as I fear for him. He has not been a good man,—at least, not a religious man: God forgive me if I am uncharitable, we are all sinners; and I pray that he may not be hurried into eternity unrepentant. Tiny, are you ready for this great effort? You must nerve yourself; always remember there was a wedding-ring with that ring, and that all may be well.'

Tiny rose slowly from the ground, and threw her arms round Uncle Timothy's neck.

'I think I am ready for all,' she whispered.

'Then let us prepare ourselves, by reading some of the Church prayers and the Psalms and Lessons. Will you try, my dear?'

Tiny suppressed her grief, and obeyed as best she could. By degrees she grew more calm, and the influence of the solemn Service, and the good man's quiet manner, stole into her own soul. Soon after they had concluded, they heard their friends come home from church. Poor Tiny's heart beat quickly.

'Give me the ring, my love. I feel that if I do not go through with this matter at once, I shall not do it at all,' said Mr. Barnard.

Tiny gave the ring, and seated herself on a low seat, almost behind her friend, where she could see Mr. Michelson, if he came in, without being particularly remarked. She took a book, and sat in an agony of terror, better imagined than described. She felt that her hour was come.

The door opened, and Mr. Michelson entered. Mr. Barnard moved, and Tiny half rose.

'Oh, do not disturb yourselves,' said Mr. Michelson briskly.

'I shall be delighted to have a quiet hour with you before the dressing-bell rings.'

He was evidently in good health and spirits, and walked across the room and sat down in his arm-chair more easily than he had done of late.

'Mr. Barnard, I have much to thank you for; you have understood my case, you have done me good,' he said, rubbing his hands by the fire.

'Happiness has done more for you than I have done. Cheerful society and domestic pleasures are the best physicians,' replied Uncle Timothy.

Tiny looked at Mr. Michelson, and found that his eyes were fixed on her, as she sat half-hidden in the firelight; they were quickly withdrawn.

'You are right—right,' hastily repeated Mr. Michelson; 'I hope to have these doctors in future.'

'We have been examining a curious ring,' said Mr. Barnard tremulously.

Oh! how Tiny started, and how pitiably fast her heart beat, as she in her turn fixed her eyes on him she believed to be the arbiter of her fate!

'It is a cameo: you are versed in such things,' continued Uncle Timothy. 'Perhaps you will give me your opinion upon it?'

'With pleasure,' said Mr. Michelson, stretching out his hand and taking the ring.

Mr. Michelson stooped towards the fire to examine the ring, for the day was waning fast. The ring dropped from his hand upon the hearth.

'Where did you get that ring?' he cried, suddenly grasping the elbow of his chair convulsively; 'it was—it was'—

'It was my mother's!' shrieked Tiny, rising and confronting Mr. Michelson with a resolution that she had not believed herself possessed of.

'And who—who—who was she?' stammered Mr. Michelson.

'You know—you must tell me,' she said boldly, as if inspired, fixing her large eyes upon those of the trembling man. 'She died twenty years ago, when I was born; her name was Sophia; she had this ring and a wedding-ring next her heart. She wore a large Indian shawl. She had hair like mine; she was—she was'—

'She was my wife! and you are—O God!'

Here Mr. Michelson fell on his knees before the trembling and excited girl, and clasped his hands.

'Your daughter!' she shrieked, and would have fallen, had not Mr. Barnard supported her.

She recovered herself, however, and endeavoured to raise the kneeling father she had found, but could not. His hands clasped, his eyes fixed on her, he seemed paralyzed. At that moment Chatham came into the room.

'Do not be alarmed: help him to rise—something has occurred—do not ring,' said Mr. Barnard.

'Pardon—pardon—Sophia!' muttered Mr. Michelson.

Tiny threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him.

'Rise, for my sake,' she cried, endeavouring to assist him.

She on one side, and Chatham on the other, managed to place him in his chair, whilst Mr. Barnard went out, called loudly for Jessie, and went with her in search of medicine.

'She is—she is—my Sophia—my wife—my daughter—your sister,' muttered Mr. Michelson at intervals, trying to bring together the hands of the brother and sister, who each held one of his.

'Jessie, send Pynsent here,' said Uncle Timothy, as they again reached the library door, 'and tell every one that Mr. Michelson is suddenly taken ill; but you had better let the dinner and everything go on as usual. Just put the candle and glass on the table, but take no further notice.'

Jessie did as she was desired, and was about to hurry from the room, when Mr. Michelson became conscious she was there, and tried to speak.

'Miss—Miss—Jess—she is my wife—my Sophia.'

Uncle Timothy gave Tiny the medicine, from whose hand Mr. Michelson took it readily. Jessie went in search of Pynsent, who soon came.

'I think it will pass off,' he said, as he felt the pulse.

'This is—my daughter—my wife—Sophia—Cordelia'—again began Mr. Michelson, looking at the astonished Pynsent, and pointing to Tiny.

'What is the matter?—what can it be?' asked the alarmed Chatham. 'What does he mean?'

'It is an affection of the heart,' said Pynsent; 'but his pulse is better.'

'Is he dying?' whispered Tiny, as the eyes closed, and a deadly paleness overspread the face.

'Dying!—I—I—am very—well,' gasped the patient, attempting to rise. 'Where is—my wife—my Sophia?'

So firm was his grasp of Tiny's hand, that she could not disengage it for a moment. As the medicine took effect, and the violent spasm at his heart abated, he sank into a kind of torpor; but still he held the hand. Tiny was obliged to sit down at his feet, whilst the others arranged his pillows, and drew out the sofa

part of his easy-chair, and endeavoured to make him comfortable.

He remained in this state for about two or three hours, during which time dinner was served, and the rest of the party went through a somewhat constrained and uneasy repast. Chatham, at Mr. Timothy Barnard's request, took his father's place at table, and Mr. Timothy Barnard, Charles, and Tiny alone remained with Mr. Michelson. Tiny had requested Uncle Timothy to tell her husband of the scene that had taken place, and he was resolved not to leave her under such circumstances.

Thus Tiny sat on a low stool at her newly-found father's side, watching his oppressed breathing, and wondering if he would ever open his eyes and speak again. His features were so pale and convulsed that she fancied he was dying, and all Uncle Timothy's assurances were necessary to convince her that there was at least no immediate danger; the worst was over for the present. She prayed earnestly that her father might not be taken from her before he had learned to love her, and she had shown him that she desired to love and care for him,—before he had disclosed the secret of her birth, and proved the truth of the broken words he had uttered concerning her and her mother. Those were hours of mortal agony for the poor daughter, and scarcely less so for her husband, who tried by whispered words of affection to soothe her troubled spirit.

At last Mr. Michelson's eyes unclosed, and rested at once upon Tiny.

'Sophia!' was his first word, 'you are there;' and he pressed Tiny's hand tightly.

He moved a little, and perceived Charles, who appeared to awaken his mind to some other subject.

'Ah, those pictures! That Cordelia was my daughter—your wife. You were generous to marry an unknown girl,—but all the Burtons are generous.'

He was evidently regaining his intellect, and the watchers listened attentively. Uncle Timothy drew near to feel his pulse.

'That other draught, Charles,' he said.

Charles got it, and gave it to Tiny, from whom Mr. Michelson at once took it.

'Mr. Barnard, you are very good—too good,—better than I deserve. You have been a father to my Sophia; yes, her name is Sophia. My mind is clear now, and I am better. My child, can you forgive me? I loved your mother,—yes, I loved her; and you will love me for her sake.'

Tiny embraced her father, and her tears fell upon his face.

'Now, Mr. Barnard, tell me how and where you found this child and her mother.'

Mr. Barnard related the story of Tiny's birth, and her mother's death.

'Will you call Chatham?' cried Mr. Michelson,—'my son? Good God! what a sinner I have been! I shall never be forgiven,—never. I have killed my wife,—alienated my son,—renounced my child. I must make what reparation I can. Bring them all here,—all—all—quick! Go, sir, bring them all!—aunts, uncles, brothers, friends,—all who know this child, and have given her the love and protection that I refused her. Do not hesitate, Chatham; I can bear it now. Let all who are in the next room come here; bring your wife also: every one must acknowledge her.'

Uncle Timothy signed to Chatham to obey his father, who was in a state of great excitement. The worthy doctor knew that it was possible for the desire to do justice to decrease as the sudden excitement decreased, and he was anxious to have all made clear whilst the inclination lasted.

The library was soon filled with wondering guests, who grouped themselves in different parts of the room, some sitting, some standing, as most convenient. Anna was placed near the fire, opposite her father-in-law and Tiny; and Chatham again stationed himself at the side of his father, leaning one arm on the back of his chair, and standing. Charles stood behind Tiny's low seat, as if to sustain her, and she hung her head low—very low—to hide the tears and agitation of her countenance. Aunt Betsey held a prominent position, rather in the foreground, in a large red-leather chair, Jessie standing by her side, in the hope of suppressing any sudden outburst of pride or passion that might arise at Mr. Michelson's narrative. The sailor, true to himself and his profession, managed to place himself beside the pretty Violet; whilst the Lady Georgiana, the young widow, and Rose were surrounded by Captain Burford, Nelson, Mr. James Barnard, and Pynsent. All awaited Mr. Michelson's pleasure with breathless attention.

That gentleman endeavoured to rise somewhat from his partially recumbent position, but was unable to do so. A heavy frown passed over his face at this loss of power. Chatham assisted him, and, arranging the pillows, managed to place him nearly upright.

'Let me face them all,' he said; 'I am not ashamed of a daughter so beautiful and so gifted.'

Chatham moved the chair a little, so that it was sideways to the fire, and allowed Mr. Michelson to command the whole room. He passed his hand over his forehead, and then looked resolutely

around, as if to see that all whom he wanted were present. Appearing satisfied, he began as follows, in an excited but perfectly steady voice :—

'I did not expect that a Christmas Day so much desired by me would end thus. I hope you will all kindly excuse my not being able to appear at the dinner table; I was overcome by an extraordinary event that you shall hear. Lady Georgiana, you will pardon my referring to the past; I do it to repair a wrong.

'About four-and-twenty years ago, your sister, my wife, was taken ill. We were in Italy, and I did not very well know how to provide suitable attendance for her. The English physician recommended a companion, and said that he knew a young lady who wanted such a situation. As Lady Charlotte was consumptive, she was ordered to remain abroad, and I therefore proposed to her this plan. She was always gentle, and easily persuaded to what was for her good, and accordingly consented to be introduced to the young lady recommended to her. She was pleased with her manners and appearance, and at once engaged her as companion.

'Miss Rutherford was the daughter of an English gentleman of respectability, a half-pay officer, who had married an Italian lady, and resided and died in Italy. He left his wife and daughter dependent upon the small pension of a lieutenant's widow. The daughter determined to assist her mother and support herself, and accordingly became companion to my wife. She was highly accomplished, and very beautiful, and I—I admired her exceedingly; no one could avoid doing so who was devoted to beauty, as I have always been. She was very attentive to Lady Charlotte, who became much attached to her.

'Lady Charlotte lingered on for some time in a very weak state, and at last died. I must confess here, with sorrow, that I was never a kind husband to her, although she was a faithful wife to me. She had all that she could desire, except my love,—may God forgive me! I loved Miss Rutherford, and did all I could secretly to win her affections. I believe I succeeded. I certainly made her very wretched, for she was good and well-principled, and attached to my wife, and none know but myself what she suffered secretly. I fear Lady Charlotte suspected our attachment, for on her deathbed she told Miss Rutherford that she forgave her, if she had wronged her. I now see, for the first time in my life, the selfishness and wickedness of my own conduct. Hitherto I have lived for myself and the gratification of my passions; if—but this is not to the purpose.

'In one month after Lady Charlotte's death, I was privately married to Miss Rutherford. I made her believe that I could

not for a time declare our marriage, and that, at all events, it would be impossible to do so until a twelvemonth after my wife's death, as the world would consider it indecorous. In about six or seven months from that time, imperative business, and the necessity of getting money, called me into Somersetshire. Sophia would not remain behind, so, taking leave of her mother, she accompanied me to England, ostensibly to manage my household. We remained a short time in this house, during which period she became every day more and more anxious that I should publicly acknowledge her as my wife. We had many quarrels, and she saw that the suspicion of the servants was aroused; she was a woman of a most excitable temper, and one evening we had a furious dispute. She declared that if I would not at once avow our marriage, or return with her to Italy, she would herself go to her mother, confess all, and live with her, until I chose to come and fetch her, and receive her openly as my wife. I was in a great passion, and refused to do either, little imagining that she would put her threat into execution. She left me in a most excited state, and I never saw her again. The breakfast was ready as usual at half-past nine, and I waited until ten, to see whether she would come and preside; she did not come, and I sent to inquire for her. The answer was that she had not returned from her walk. I despatched a servant to search for her; he brought word that she had been seen going to the town. I sent there at once, and heard that she had started by the London coach. You may imagine my grief and passion. I had no doubt that she had left me, as she said, to return to Italy.

'The following morning I ordered my confidential servant to go to London, and, if possible, to find out how and where she had gone, and if she had not already left England, to give her letters from me, to induce her to return. That evening I had promised to join a party at your house, Captain Burford, and, fearing to excite any suspicions, I fulfilled my engagement. I remember the evening well, and the exertions I made to appear myself. In the course of a few days my servant returned, having failed to discover any traces of the fugitive. I at once started for London, and thence for Italy, not imagining that she would remain an hour in England, if she could avoid it. I did not suspect the real state of the case, and therefore scarcely made an inquiry about her until I reached her mother's house, taking it for granted that I should find her there. I knew she had money sufficient to carry her to her journey's end, as I made her a liberal allowance.

'Of course she had not been heard of by her friends, and

their anxiety and mine was fearful. It eventually caused her mother's death. We made every possible inquiry, but in vain. Meanwhile she had given birth to this child. Such inquiries and advertisements as Mr. Barnard or the authorities may have set afloat, I never heard of; and had it not been for this excellent man, my child would have been consigned to the workhouse, and her mother to a pauper's grave.'

When Mr. Michelson ceased speaking, there was a temporary silence; no one seemed to know exactly what to do or say. Tiny could scarcely repress the sobs that had been gathering during her father's history, and was covering her face with both her hands. Tears were in other eyes besides her own, and every one longed to embrace and comfort her. Captain Burford was the first to move, and to break the silence. He came to Mr. Michelson, and, holding out his hand, in his blunt, honest manner said,—

'All's right,—all's well now, my good friend. I am glad you have found such a daughter: you will be a happier man from this time forth, now you have made a clean breast of it. Tiny is the best girl in the world, next to Jessie.'

'Tiny was always my child, and promised to be my housekeeper long ago,' said Uncle James, coming forward, and gently lifting her from her low seat. 'I am glad you have found a real parent, lovey, though you should never have wanted one as long as brother Timothy and I lived.'

'Mr. Barnard, allow me to shake hands with you, and thank you,' said Mr. Michelson in a broken voice; 'and with you, most excellent doctor. You have all been fathers, brothers, and sisters to my poor, deserted child. May God bless you all! Chatham,—your sister.'

'Yes, father,' said Chatham, 'I am proud of my sister.'

'It was evident that Mr. Michelson's strength was failing, yet he looked anxiously towards Lady Georgiana, as if he expected her to say or do something. Her pride, and the love she bore her sister's memory, were struggling with better feelings. Mr. Michelson had treated her sister unkindly, and this was the child of her rival! She looked for a moment at the drooping, pale, sad face of the overwhelmed girl, and Christian principle conquered. She went towards the father and daughter, and said quietly,—

'Mr. Michelson, I will try to think no more of the past. I hope you may live to be happy with your children, and that we may be friends.'

Aunt Betsey, who had sat erect and indignant during the narrative, was the last to make any advances. As she rose to

depart, she was obliged to pass Mr. Michelson, and, seeing how ill and depressed he looked, and how very handsome her husband became by comparison, she relented. Perhaps, as she stood before Mr. Michelson, the thought may have passed through his mind, that, had he married her in early life, when he really loved her, much after-sin and present sorrow and shame might have been spared. At all events, he felt how much more prosperous and happy she now was than he; and he began to realize the fact that the Burtons, in their honourable industry, had been far better off than he had been in his career of selfish prosperity. But alas! the knowledge came too late.

'Good evening to you, Mr. Michelson,' said the stately lady, holding out her hand; 'I hope soon to hear that you are better. Good-bye, my dear niece; I am glad that you have now found your position in life.'

As Aunt Betsey embraced Tiny, it must be confessed that she warmed towards her. She never could take kindly to the nameless orphan; but she might now venture to recognise her as the acknowledged daughter of Mr. Michelson.

'Madam,' said Mr. Michelson, 'if I ever offended you or your family, I have been sufficiently punished, by having both a son and daughter adopted amongst you. You have all rendered good for evil.'

This was the last connected speech that Mr. Michelson made. As his first-love swept out of the room, he sank back exhausted. The men-servants were summoned, and he was carried up to his bedroom. It was discovered that his legs were paralyzed, and the doctors both feared that he could never recover the use of them. All that he seemed conscious of for some time after he was laid on his bed, was the presence of Chatham and Tiny. 'Sophia' was the one word that he murmured; and his hand was pressed on his daughter's when he fell into a troubled sleep, still muttering the name he had been ashamed to articulate in public, when his doing so might have, perhaps, made him a better man.

CHAPTER XLIX.

'One place, one only place, there was on earth
Where no man e'er was fool, however mad,—
"Men may live fools, but fools they cannot die."'—POLLOK.

THERE is perhaps nothing more painful than to watch the gradual decay of the powers of mind and body of one stricken by paralysis. For this Chatham and Tiny seemed to have recovered their father,—*seemed*, we say advisedly, for to all appearance they lost him in finding him; still a higher Power had guided them and him to one another, at that closing period of his life, for His own wise purposes.

Mr. Michelson still existed, but it was little more: his faculties, though not entirely destroyed, were so much impaired as to render him wholly dependent upon those about him for amusement, and almost for speech. His temper was naturally imperious, and now that reason ceased to control it at all, it was continually giving way. He constantly miscalled whatever he wanted, so that it was difficult for the most patient of his nurses to understand him, or anticipate his desires. He would grow angry at the slightest delay or provocation, with every one but Tiny; and when she by a word or a kiss had quieted him, he would burst into a flood of infantile tears. This grief, most painful to witness, would be succeeded by a kind of consciousness of having impaired his personal appearance thereby, and he would have the looking-glass brought to him, cause his hair to be arranged, his cravat and diamond studs placed aright, and a flower inserted into his button-hole. Tiny never forgot the daily flower, the choicest she could find; and he was always pleased to see it. He was wheeled and carried from room to room nearly every hour, such was his impatience at being in one place; and all the strong or weak points of his character, that had made his life one of selfish gratification and amusement, appeared to grow into childish strength and weakness, as he approached the grave. He still clung to outward beauty. Anna and Tiny he would have always with him. He still liked his paintings, statues, and antiques, and would be moved from picture to picture, statue to statue, just as, in his earlier years, he had wandered from country to country in search of them. Music or singing soothed him, but generally brought him

to tears. As Anna recovered some degree of strength, she would occasionally play and sing to him; but the effort cost her so much, that Chatham averted it in every possible way.

Tiny devoted herself entirely to her father and Uncle Timothy. Charles was compelled to leave her at the Hall, to pursue his labours as a painter, for his pictures were now called for, and the only grief he had was, that he must this year work alone. He had prepared one or two small pictures for exhibition, and now set to work upon a larger one. Pynsent, in re-furnishing and beautifying his house for his bride, left him the old studio at the top.

But Tiny! she read the Bible to her father, and Uncle Timothy reaped the fruits of it. Sometimes Mr. Michelson would seem to listen,—would even make approving exclamations; but whether the words reached his heart, or merely the sound his ear, nobody could tell. Still she read, and hoped, and prayed, as she had done when poor Mrs. Eveleigh was ill. Strange, that whenever the church bell sounded, Mr. Michelson would be taken to church,—wheeled in his chair, or carried, a dead-weight, by his servants. With a prayer-book on a desk by his side, sometimes seeming to read, sometimes looking at the clergyman, sometimes joining in a response, as he caught the words from Uncle Timothy, he appeared contented, and even happy. How fervently would Tiny pray that the 'Lord, have mercy upon us—Christ, have mercy upon us,' that he tried to utter, might be heard and answered, soulless as seemed the utterer. His presence was as true a lesson to the congregation as was the sermon. Some pitied him; some said he deserved his end; all murmured that riches and grandeur could not save from the last great enemy. Every one looked with pity and a certain feeling of affection on the young pale daughter, whom they had always known as the orphan, dependent on Mr. Barnard for love and sympathy. As she attended her father day after day, either in the carriage or by the side of his wheeled chair, the poor dropped a curtsey to her, and spoke in whispers of Miss Rutherford, and of how she had been the wife of Mr. Michelson, and mother of Tiny. They had always been fond of Chatham, and it must not be wondered at if they looked forward with hope to the time when he and one of their favourite Burtons should be master and mistress at the Hall.

Chatham was very good to Tiny. Brotherly and sisterly feelings grew up between them by degress, and the noble-minded though thoughtless Chatham soon won the love of his half-sister.

It was evident to him that his father had some wish concerning Tiny, that he could not express. By degrees he gathered that there was money somewhere, that he desired should be settled upon her. He had long conferences with the bailiff, who declared that all the ready money had been invested in pictures. One day, however, his father pointed to his desk, then to the different pictures, and finally spoke of picture-dealers and brokers, tolerably clearly. Upon turning over the different papers in the desk, Chatham found one from a picture-dealer, who said he had been offered six thousand pounds for different paintings, that, it appeared, Mr. Michelson had requested him either to sell or value. Chatham read this to his father, who at once muttered, 'Sell—for her—for her,' pointing to Tiny.

Chatham wrote at once and desired the pictures to be sold. All was arranged, and in a short time Tiny became mistress of six thousand pounds, which Chatham caused to be duly settled and funded, so as to keep her from want, in case of the failure of the professional crop. She seemed mostly thankful for this income, because it would enable her husband to pursue his art without feeling that absolute bread depended upon it.

From Mr. Michelson's impatience of remaining long in one spot, it resulted that he made almost daily visits to Fairfield, and occasionally honoured the Grange with his presence. Melancholy as it was to see him lifted in and out of his carriage, no one attempted to oppose him. Chatham felt that if he had not been an affectionate father, he himself had not been a very conciliating son, and so determined to bear with his most tyrannical will at this closing scene of his life. Tiny felt that it was too great a blessing to have an acknowledged father, ever to thwart him in any way, and, moreover, was only too glad to accompany him to happy Fairfield,—still, and always, happy Fairfield. When here, Mr. Michelson would sit contentedly for hours, and frequently converse with tolerable ease. Jessie was always ready to amuse him, and her simple ballads would quiet his nervous restlessness, more than anything else. Here, too, he met Captain Burford and Nelson, themselves so happy and hopeful that their joyful faces communicated something like pleasure to his.

His one great object was to see Jessie married to Nelson. It mattered not who was present, he would talk about the wedding incessantly, and he had a ready coadjutor in the Captain.

The time of violets and cowslips had come round, and Jessie rejoiced that there was still a child at Fairfield, to gather those favourite flowers amidst the fields and hedgerows, and fill the old

house with them. She and little Chatham, who now divided his time between the Hall and Fairfield, wandered many an hour in the old haunts, gathering baskets full of treasures, and making those delicious tisty-tosties that are such delights to children of all growths. You may be sure that Nelson was not far off; it was so pleasant to live over again the years of boyhood and girlhood together, that they quite forgot they were arrived at steady age, and strung the luscious yellow cowslips into the full round ball, with as much glee as little Chatham himself. As Anna regained strength, she and her husband would follow quietly the footsteps of their boy, and in this lovely spring weather would talk of the little ones they had lost, stooping beneath the thorn-bushes to cull the sweet violet, or in the green meadow for the cowslip, and thinking how like those pure and fragrant flowers were their own young buds, now blossoming in heaven. Thus they became wiser and better, and therefore happier in their joint lives.

By and by, ere yet spring had lost herself in summer, and whilst the white may gleamed amidst its green ornaments, others were added to the wanderers amongst the cowslip meadows and violet ways. Pynsent and Charles were loitering about from time to time as they could manage to leave London for a day or two, to see the beloved faces, and breathe the fresh air of the dear old place; and Peter was with them, rejoicing in his home and dry land. They even contrived to wheel the poor paralytic into the fields, and to carry him the flowers he loved. That one bit of nature, that love of flowers, was a redeeming point in him, who had, alas! so little good to redeem the evil. And now he began to enjoy the open air, and the sunshine, and the song of birds, and to be restless within doors; and sometimes he would look from Tiny up to the clear blue heavens, and sigh heavily, and even weep. Then she would try to make him speak and think of 'the heaven of heavens,' and sometimes he would listen gravely; at others, grow impatient, and turn to Mr. Barnard, and talk of his complaints.

Thus time passed on, and before May was out the wedding-day was fixed, and Mr. Michelson was satisfied. Cheerful, in spite of the great shadow his melancholy condition cast, were the family meetings at Fairfield. The inmates of the Hall, the Grange, and the friends in town, congregated there around Jessie,—the mother, sister, friend, and future bride,—for had she not been, and was she not, one and all? Of course she and Pynsent were to renounce single blessedness on the same day, and the weddings were to take place at Fairfield.

We have already married so many of our friends in this true history, that we must not venture upon another description. They were married much in the same style as their predecessors, and, not being very young people, or remarkably sentimental, and not having any distressed friends and relatives to leave behind them, they all answered 'I will' very firmly and distinctly, and had no compunctions of conscience at the 'love, honour, and obey.' Nelson was determined that Jessie should enjoy her honeymoon, so he took her for a regular tour on the Continent, and left the Captain to take care of Fairfield. The joy of that excellent man may be conceived.

Pynsent and Louisa went straight to London, and enjoyed their honeymoon in an unsentimental but very agreeable manner, in that handsome house in Duke Street. Perhaps there never were a merrier bride and bridegroom.

Mr. Michelson witnessed the weddings, and was one of the family party at Fairfield during the day. He seemed more himself on the occasion than he had been before, since the attack. He made handsome presents to the brides, and solemnly, though incoherently, charged Nelson to love and cherish Jessie. There was that in his manner which brought tears into all eyes. He seemed to be reproaching himself in counselling another. When he returned home that night, accompanied by his two children, Uncle Timothy, Charles, and Anna, he was very much depressed. He endeavoured to make them understand that he hoped they would never leave him. The following day he had another paralytic stroke, and from that time was confined wholly to his room; he was, indeed, a melancholy wreck; and the tenderest of children, which Tiny truly was, could only pray that he might be gently floated away to the everlasting ocean. There was a change in his poor stranded mind as well; it was now only quieted by hearing prayers or psalms read aloud, or by seeing his children on their knees. With his large eyes restlessly seeking something that they could not find, and his hand grasping something that seemed unattainable, he lay almost speechless, listening to words that he could no longer understand. Tiny once caught the muttered word 'Christ' upon his lips, and the poor child lived afterwards in hope that it was registered in heaven. The closing scene was so solemn and affecting, that none of those present ever forgot it. It caused Chatham, weeping like a child, to vow henceforth 'to live as he should wish he had done when he came to die;' and Anna to sob out her resolution of preparing in this world for the next. That they sought and received strength to keep the vow and resolution, will be seen in their after-life.

We will humbly hope that the united prayers of the living for the departing soul were heard by Him who is a God of mercy; but truly the melancholy deathbed of poor Mr. Michelson was calculated to remind his children that the only true preparation for a happy death is a holy life.

THE END.

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